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Acquisition and appropriation of revue practice at the Friedrichstadt-Palast since 1945

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RECONSTRUCTING THE EAST GERMAN EXTRAVAGANZA

Acquisition and appropriation of revue practice
at the Friedrichstadt-Palast since 1945

Andy Machals

A dissertation submitted to the University of Bristol in accordance with the requirements for award of the degree of Doctor in Philosophy in Theatre in the Faculty of Arts, School of Arts, Department of Theatre.

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Abstract

This dissertation interprets formerly East German Marxist concepts of cultural acquisition and appropriation in terms of performance studies and applies this lens to an analysis of the Friedrichstadt-Palast's revue practices since 1945. The methodology of this dissertation revisits archival material of the revue's past and, for the first time, relates the theatre's revue practice from before to the practices after German reunification in 1990 by construing the revue as the epitome of performance reconstruction. This dissertation thus challenges dominant notions of reappraising the East German past by relating the Friedrichstadt-Palast's present to its past performance practices.

Chapter 1 considers conscious reconstructions of dramaturgical patterns since 1945 and introduces the concept of 'prospective consciousness' as an ideological form. Chapter 2 explores how unconscious ways of reconstructing and appropriating bodily practices have formed the moving socialist revue body in the German Democratic Republic (GDR). In light of this analysis, the Friedrichstadt-Palast's development from a variety to a revue theatre in the 1970s is re-evaluated as a development based in both economics and what I call 'socialist virtuosity'. Chapter 3 considers the building of the New Friedrichstadt-Palast in 1984 as an extension of Marxist cultural techniques into aspects of stage technology. Although it is commonly considered as the last functional building built in the GDR, I discuss it as a manifestation of a specifically East German 'techno-futurism'. Chapter 4 considers the Palast's contemporary practice and identifies how principles, which used to be based in ideological considerations of culture, have turned into paradigms, that is, foundational designs that express the ways in which the Palast's contemporary global aspirations take form. Through considering the GDR revue, I was able to draw out the various temporalities that still shape the contemporary revue and that, at the same time, trouble concepts of Germany's coming-to-terms with its past.

Author's declaration

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award. Except where indicated by specific reference in the text, the work is the candidate's own work. Work done in collaboration with, or with the assistance of, others, is indicated as such. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

SIGNED: _____ DATE: _____

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A version of the second chapter appeared as “Of course there is no such thing as a socialist handstand, but...”: Socialism, humanism, and virtuosity in East German variety theatre practice during the 1950s and 1960s’ in Nicholas Ridout (ed.), *Theatre Survey*, 58:1, January 2017, 48-67. Enormous gratitude is due to Nicholas. The conversations we had about this work have made me a better researcher.

I dedicate this dissertation to Harry Machals, my grandfather, who was born in 1928, four years after Charell’s first revue premiered in Berlin. This dissertation is dedicated to him, not only because he helped shape parts of the culture that this thesis discusses, but also because he is a fantastic granddad and I sincerely hope that seeing this thesis encourages him to finally get his own monograph finished—his autobiography.

AM, Bristol in August 2017.

The forgotten socialist revue extravaganza and its legacies



IMAGE 0.01. The new Friedrichstadt-Palast at Friedrichstraße 107 today. It opened in 1984. Berlin's TV tower with its iconic top sphere and spire, built in 1967 in East Germany, is in the background.

It is a peculiar paradox that the contemporary Friedrichstadt-Palast¹, Berlin's largest revue theatre, struggles reappraising its own performance histories while claiming that its revues are successors of a long tradition that spans almost a hundred years. In its institutional narrative, the Friedrichstadt-Palast assumes its origins in the Weimar revue. It states that '[t]he theatrical history of the Friedrichstadt-Palast began on 28 November 1919 with the inauguration of the Großes Schauspielhaus' (Friedrichstadt-Palast, 2015:[online]).² In 1919, theatre director Max Reinhardt bought the building and brought theatrical spectacle to the institution, which had originally been conceptualised as Berlin's first market hall, but was converted into a large-scale theatre for mostly circus and equestrian spectacles less than a year after its opening. He called it

¹ In this thesis, I use the hyphenated version of 'Friedrichstadt-Palast' and the shorter vernacular version 'Palast' interchangeably. The spelling was changed into 'Friedrichstadtpalast' in the 1970s, but was restored to its original spelling from 1947 in 2011 (Friedrichstadt-Palast, 2011: [online]). The old spelling in citations is unchanged.

² "Die Bühnengeschichte des Friedrichstadt-Palastes Berlin beginnt am 28. November 1919 mit der Eröffnung des Großen Schauspielhauses." The old Friedrichstadt-Palast was located next to the Berliner Ensemble (which was Brecht's domain), at Am Zirkus 1. Chapter 3.2 elaborates the building's history.

Großes Schauspielhaus ('Great Playhouse') and commissioned architect Hans Poelzig to refurbish its interiors. When Reinhardt's spectacular stagings of classical dramas could not find an audience big enough for his activities to be considered profitable, choreographer Erik Charell (born Erich Karl Löwenberg, 1895-1973) took over the theatre's creative leadership in 1924 and staged three revues—*An Alle* ('To All', 1924), *Für Dich* ('For You', 1925), and *Von Mund zu Mund* ('From Mouth to Mouth', 1926), which became the epitome of the golden age of the Berlin revue during the 1920s.³ In 1984, the new Friedrichstadt-Palast (see image 0.01) replaced Reinhardt's, Poelzig's and Charell's former domain due to the dilapidation of the Großes Schauspielhaus. Even though the theatre had produced mass entertainments since 1873, the Palast still perceives its contemporary revue productions as direct descendants of Charell's extravagant revue traditions. While this narrative establishes an institutional origin based in Berlin's interwar revue cultures, the remaining histories of the city's revue affinity and the role of the Palast therein remain silent.

The unspoken historical narrative concerns the almost 45 years of revue making in the post-war era, that is, during the existence of the German Democratic Republic (GDR). This is largely because the GDR is predominantly seen as a container defined by its temporal, geographic, political, and ideological boundaries: also known as East Germany, the socialist country existed since 1949 and ended with German reunification in 1990 when it acceded to the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and thus gave up its socialist ideology, ended its economic system, and terminated its political operations, which were run by the Marxist-Leninist *Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschland* ('Socialist Unity Party', SED).⁴ The manner in which the Palast deals with its own history is an example of how seeing the GDR as a contained moment also means deactivating the memory of it. Historian Charles S. Maier has described the ways in which socialist Germany is remembered as part of a 'cold memory', a memory that increasingly vanishes, because it is deemed irrelevant. Yet, while it is easy to conceptualise the GDR as such a container, not everything can simply be contained within it. To study East German history thus concerns the country's cultural legacy and

³ See Jansen, 1987: 128–66. After the revue successes, Charell combined forms of the revue with forms of the operetta. His most famous piece is *Im weißen Rößl* ('The White Horse Inn', 1930), see Clarke, 2007:108-139.

⁴ The party was a merger of the SPD (Social Democratic Party of Germany) and the KPD (Communist Party of Germany) enforced by the Soviet occupying forces in East Germany in 1946. When the GDR's second constitution was put into place in 1968, it provided the legal basis for the country's state-socialist system and made the SED its ruling party, hence the term 'SED dictatorship' as used in ordinary language. This resulted in the perception of the party as directing and controlling all aspects of socialist culture, politics, and everyday life.

the visibility of that legacy in today's cultural production. By contrast, in the Palast's institutional narrative, the sets of performance practices that formed during the GDR are assumed to have ended together with the country in 1990 during Germany's reunification and have become subject to the political debates about East German memory. Instead, 'Las Vegas in Berlin' (The Wyld, 2014:[01:19]) is today's motto. Although the Palast produces revues in the referential context of global show aesthetics for which Las Vegas is the Palast's imaginary anchor, it still operates in a network of performance practices that are local and have grown over the past century, thus also in the GDR.⁵

This thesis is about the Friedrichstadt-Palast's East German past and it is about the influence of that past in the institution's present aesthetic operations. Throughout this dissertation I argue that forty years of performance making under the socialist regime have created distinct methods of aestheticisation that are still at work in today's revue practice. They are, however, tacitly recycled rather than actively challenged, and thus create a surface strangeness in the ways in which the contemporary revue aestheticises performance practices and references. As a result, the ways in which the Palast structures ideas in revue-dramaturgical patterns, shapes physicalities, and conceptualises the *mise-en-scène* of stage technology still expose many traces of a socialist performance aesthetics. It is the aim of this thesis to define these practices of aestheticisation in their historical development and to parse them out of the Palast's contemporary revue practice. To recognise the paradigms of production under which the Palast creates performances today means to understand how the institution's behaviours in acquiring and appropriating practices of theatre and performance have taken shape during the GDR and how their increasing invisibility since reunification caused styles to become a foundational design, that is, patterns of vernacular behaviour. By employing methods of performance studies, this thesis thus tells a revisionist history that aims at providing ways of thinking to reappraise the ongoing presence of the repressed memory of the GDR revue in the Friedrichstadt-Palast's production history.

In the chapters that follow, I discuss East German theatre makers—such as Gottfried Herrmann, Wolfgang E. Struck, Wolfgang Tilgner, Peter Erdmann, Wolfgang Stiebritz, Sabine Reuß, or Gisela Walther,

⁵ I elaborate the development towards the global show in chapter 4.

amongst many others—as the ones who shaped the revue extravaganza long after Reinhardt, Charell, and Poelzig stopped producing them. More than 20 years after Charell’s revue successes, that is, after the Second World War and folklorist operetta productions under National Socialism,⁶ East German revue makers picked up the performance histories from before the war, developed the genre’s traditions for more than 35 years, and eventually built the new Palast on the basis of what had by then become a specifically socialist kind of revue in 1980. While Charell, Poelzig, and Reinhardt’s influence is specifically expressed in the Palast’s own historicisation, the influence of East German theatre makers still remains undervalued.

In fact, the Friedrichstadt-Palast’s East German revue history has recently increasingly been written out of the institution’s historical narrative, which corresponds to the view that the GDR’s culture ended with German reunification in 1990 and ought to be forgotten. Furthermore, none of the available literature discusses the Friedrichstadt-Palast’s history in terms of East German performance practice, despite the fact that it had been shaped by a specifically Marxist cultural practice for almost 40 years.⁷ These trends are evident in the recent publications on the Palast’s history. Wolfgang Schumann’s 1995 book described the institution as a venue for national and international music and dance performances. The in-house ensemble, which comprised a staff of several hundreds, amongst them dancers, choreographers, dramaturgs, directors, and stage designers and their technical crews, received little mention, even though their activities will be important to this thesis’ argument for continuity. Rolf Hosfeld, Jim Rakete, and Rainer Wörtmann’s book from 1999 reframed the institutional history by writing about the fascination with the Weimar revue and linked it to the contemporaneous Friedrichstadt-Palast revue through behind-the-scenes reports and interviews with dancers and directors. This gives the impression that the contemporaneous Palast revue of 1999 was directly related to its Weimar predecessors of 75 years ago. In the latest book on the Palast’s history from 2009, Roland Welke provided an illustrated production history of revues since 1984, the year the Palast had been rebuilt. Although it provides a great number of production photographs, there is no commentary as to how pre- and post-reunification performance practices are related. As a result, the

⁶ For a history of the Friedrichstadt-Palast during the times of National Socialism, then named Theater des Volkes ('Theater of the People'), see Carlé and Martens, 1987:85-100.

⁷ The books on the Friedrichstadt-Palast that were written during the GDR describe the revue as having been continually developed by socialist arts makers, without saying how exactly this was achieved through cultural practice. See Carlé, 1978; Carlé and Martens, 1987.

historicisation of the East German revue focusses on names of performers, topics of revues, and their extraordinary sets. All of the mentioned publications remain silent about how exactly the socialist and subsequent capitalist ideologies shaped the revue as a form of stage practice.

Reconstructing the Extravaganza

This thesis examines revue as a particular form of stage practice, that is, as a form of showing doing that becomes transmitted across time through its reconstructions. According to performance anthropologist Richard Schechner, showing doing is always ‘twice-behaved behavior’ (2013:36). Revue practice is the Palast’s historically grown form of restored behaviour that is ‘never for the first time, always for the second to ⁿth time’ (ibid). Revue, being a ‘highly flexible and amorphous form’ (Rubin, 1993:26), is the epitome of reconstructions: as its origins are assumed in the French news revues from the late nineteenth century (Klooss and Reuter, 1980:15-32; Jelavich, 1993:106)⁸, the term literally meant *revue*, ‘to see again’, and thus expresses an immediacy of its own historicisation upon which are founded the contemporaneous demands to always render the latest version of an event. To read a definition of the revue extravaganza through the lens of performance exposes its affinity to reconstructing differently that which already existed: since ‘[t]he material for a revue is largely unique and conceived specifically for that particular production’ (Rubin, 1993:27), its reconstructions are not ‘bound by constraints of narrative consistency’ (ibid), but remix archetypes of preconceived ‘modes [that] rarely exist in the pure form’ (ibid:29). Revue, in its most literal meaning, is thus a continual revision, a re-composition of acts, moments, and effects; it is twice-behaved, but always different.

The underlying assumption throughout this dissertation is that stage actions and practices are highly dependent on contexts of production and reception, which means that artistic practice can signify differently depending on the frames of reference in which practices are performed. In relation to GDR performance, this means, that although particular stage practices may have been configured in one political regime, changing acts of readership may constitute them as something different in another. Although socialist and

⁸ Examples of Berliner news revues, that is, revues that were periodically updated to include the newest fashions, gossip, and trends, are the Metropol revues between 1903-1913 (Jelavich, 1993:104-112).

democratic-capitalist systems have tried to make ideological demands on the art form, this thesis investigates the tropes of the Palast's revue performance and describes how they were constituted through performance practices that carry across many contexts of reception. From this position, I look at the GDR through the lens of performance, which allows me to recognise the cultural processes that have shaped revue making during the almost forty years of East German socialism. It also allows me to analyse how patterns of socialist revue behaviours have continued being performed after the fall of socialism; in this thesis, these patterns appear in the form of chapters about the histories of revue ideas and their dramaturgical forms, the histories of the socialist moving revue body, and the histories of stage technology and their employment to convey socialist meaning.

The revue extravaganza's *raison d'être* and at the same time its appeal are the same-but-always-different techniques of presentation. Over the decades, and especially across different political systems, the ways in which the practices of revue making have coincidentally been understood as techniques of reconstruction differ to various degrees. In the editorial article '*Vom Wesen der Revue*' ('About the essence of revue') in the programme booklet of Eric Charell's first revue at the Großes Schauspielhaus, the former Friedrichstadt-Palast, Rudolf Kasten pointed out that the revue *An Alle* ('To all, 1924) was not a retrospection, as it did not, as the word 'revue' would otherwise have suggested, harken back to old times.⁹ According to Kasten, *An Alle* did not do that precisely because the questions 'about what, about whom?' (in Jansen, 1987:141)¹⁰ remained unanswered. Scholarly consensus is, however, that Charell undoubtedly drew on an existing vocabulary of revue practices that had already been established in Weimar Berlin and New York's Broadway of the time. In this context, his revue indeed retrospected in a below-the-line fashion, that is, in the adoption of scenic ideas, aesthetics, and ways of presenting bodies. According to historian

⁹ Before Erik Charell made revues in Berlin, he was assistant stage manager in a revival of Max Reinhardt's *Miracle* in New York City's Century Theatre that premiered on 15 January 1924 (for an East German reading of Max Reinhardt's biography see Braulich, 1966:220; for Reinhardt in America see Fuhrich-Leisler and Prossnitz, 1976; for press clippings of the production see Corbin, 1924a; Corbin, 1924b). Ironically, Florence Ziegfeld had been a manager of the Century (see n.a., 1917; for Ziegfeld's *Century Girl* revues see Mordden, 2008:154-69). Personal correspondence between both cannot be evidenced. In a prose history of the Friedrichstadt-Palast from 1978, Reinhardt is quoted asking Charell to take over the Großes Schauspielhaus in Berlin to put on musical revues like Ziegfeld's, which they had seen together in New York: 'I think you are the right man to do this in an artistically enhanced form back in Berlin' (Carlé, 1978:89). Charell eventually took over the creative leadership of the Großes Schauspielhaus after Reinhardt's spectacles had failed financially (Jelavich, 1993:166). In his first revue extravaganza *An Alle*, Charell slips his American inspiration in by reconstructing Berlin vernacular to American jazz tunes, like Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*, set to the play of a light organ (ibid:90), and elaborate choreographies and human ornaments (Clarke, 2007:108-39).

¹⁰ 'Doch über was, über wen?'

Peter Jelavich, Weimar revues reflected ‘the “good old days” before the military and economic traumas’ (1993:166) caused by the First World War. Charell’s performances were aimed at pleasuring the new bourgeoisie, people still loyal to an emperor who at the time had long been gone. Charell helped them cope with the unpopular present day that was perceived as a host to a fading away of morals and of increasing complexity. Charell consciously drew on aesthetics that reconstructed the German Empire from before the Great War that ended in 1918. Amongst those were sentimental notions (like a tableau dedicated to the mothers of the world, which suggested that world peace could only be achieved by a projection of German motherhood onto all nations, ethnicities, and cultures; Jansen, 1987:156-8), ahistorical ideas (like the evocation of semi-nude woman as mythic and fairy-like creatures that intervene in life but are not of contemporary life), and fairly outdated folkloristic aesthetics (that came along with a 19th century mythology and a romanticised glorification of the present). It made claims to the new by referencing zeppelins, streetlights, increasing traffic, consumer culture, and plenty of American references (Jelavich, 1993:169), but aesthetically as well as thematically, it rendered an illusory world that was embedded in a retrospective socio-cultural movement of its time. It catered to an escapism from a reality that many people were overwhelmed by. Revue had thus been a medium of commercialised success as it pleased the needs of those who were able to afford it. Although these contradictions make Charell’s revues an unsuitable role-model for the contemporary Palast revue, both deny their tendency to reconstruct practices and references.

By contrast, the socialist revue was utterly outspoken about its methods of reconstruction and, in fact, recognised practices of performance reconstruction as its prime creative techniques, because they were an important part of the East German Marxist cultural practice. In the GDR, the revue was a form of socialist entertainment and was considered art. Based on Hegelian-Marxian concepts of historical and cultural determinism, culture was meant to produce the ideal state, that is, help reconcile the individual’s alienation from its human categories that was imposed on him through the division of labour in capitalist societies. Culture was believed to have the power to restore the humanistic aspect of the socialist society in order to help the human subject to find itself while being part of a wider community. The revolutionary pursuit of communism meant pursuing humanist values like peace, equality, brotherhood, and justice, which

would help to revive *der ganze Mensch* ('the whole human').¹¹ This shift was induced by creating a new societal order and a new aesthetic education of the socialist human being that required different modes of perception. Culture, such as the revue extravaganza at the Friedrichstadt-Palast, was attributed a cardinal role in turning the ideological horizons into tangible experiences of theatre that would help the people realise their position on the trajectory towards the utopia of communism.

In the GDR, theatre assumed a vital role in shaping and disseminating these values. In the last year of its existence, the GDR had sixty-nine theatres and thus the highest density of theatres in the world.¹² Categorised according to significance, they received a designated amount of funding from the state to finance their individual in-house creative teams, casts, and crews. As I will explain in greater detail in the forthcoming chapters, the Palast was part of a live entertainment sector, which included circuses, variety theatres, cabarets, and more. These ranged from Rostock on the Baltic Sea coast in the North and home to Klock 8, achtern Strom¹³ to Leipzig's political cabaret Pfeffermühle¹⁴ and large circuses, unified under the label of State Circus of the GDR¹⁵. The Friedrichstadt-Palast, being one of the largest stages of the country, assumed a special role amongst these theatrical forms of entertainment: on the one hand, each of its shows was considered a new piece of work that aimed at making relevant the traditions of the revue for the socialist project, on the other hand, it rendered what had been termed *Unterhaltungskunst* ('entertainment arts'), which, according to Marxist ideology, was not an art form as such, but an umbrella term for a number of cultural practices that appropriate art forms in the context of socialist arts practice. Entertainment arts were

¹¹ The concept was developed immediately following the publishing of Marx's early writings in 1932. Alfred Kurella developed from Marx the concept of 'socialist humanism' between 1936-1939. Alexander Abusch's and Johannes R. Becher's post-war deliberations further defined the East German understanding of humanism as an anti-fascist movement. For a history of the term see Groschopp, 2013:222-252.

¹² This number was taken from Traute Schölling's analysis of GDR theatre (Schölling, 1994:24). Laura Bradley offers another analysis and lists 68 institutions (Bradley, 2010:16). Horst Groschopp even mentions 213 theatres, without evidencing his categorisation or sources (Groschopp, 2013:343).

¹³ A famous TV format that featured maritime sounds and actistic performances broadcast from a sea port bar between 1964-1990. Became adapted into a Palast revue in 1973.

¹⁴ Home to many Palast comedians and conférenciers, like Helga Hahneemann, a singer and entertainer who was one of the most beloved East German comedians and a regular presenter in Friedrichstadt-Palast revues before 1990.

¹⁵ The State Circus of the GDR was comprised of Circus Barley, Circus Busch, and Circus Aeros. The history of these institutions is as varied as the Friedrichstadt-Palast's history and would deserve more space than a footnote, as their histories are intertwined in many ways. In fact, the current Friedrichstadt-Palast is located right where Circus Barley used to be situated just after the Second World War. The back-issues of the *Artistik*-magazine, to be discussed at length in Chapter 2, feature many articles about the circus's history and circus practice in particular.

considered as a specific way of processing and presenting an idea by means of other performances practices, like circus performance or several kinds of dance, singing, acting, and comedy. With the revue being such an umbrella category, the ‘catalyst entertainment art’ (M.L., 1969:20)¹⁶ played a unique role in socialism, because it organized the subordinate art forms according to socialist principles. Jürgen Rühle, head of the culture desk of the *Berliner Zeitung*, polemicized in 1952: ‘We forget often enough that one does not study art, but enjoys it. Let it be understood rightfully: if art is bland and boring, it will be ineffective’ (1952:3)¹⁷. Productions of entertainment art, such as the ones rendered by the Palast, were thus meant to convey socialist values. Obviously, this was a polemical and particularly Modernist point of view in that it assumed that revue ought to contain only socialist values. As I will point out throughout this thesis, practitioners understood their practices not as propagating such a singular discourse per se.

Performances in the GDR were meant to re-organise the aesthetic relations that bourgeois culture engendered. A theory for the acquisition and appropriation of culture was developed that was based on the history of the workers’ movement and synthesised aspects of Marxism and Leninism. In 1961, cultural theorist Alfred Kurella¹⁸ described the socialist cultural strategies as processes that acquire and appropriate behaviour:

The progress of mankind is based on the fact that their cultural achievements (in the widest sense) can be adopted and developed by the following generations. The acquisition and appropriation of the cultural heritage of bourgeois societies continues to be critical, that is, it works selectively. A socialist society transforms the cultural heritage by adapting it to its historically new, higher cultural needs, and thereby developing it. The criteria for the critical selection from the bourgeois cultural heritage are not rigid and not valid for all times. They change in practice in the context of both class struggle and the specific aims of society’s reconfiguration. Socialism continues to reposition itself with regards to these aims in the course of the various stages of its development. (Kurella, 1961, n.p.)¹⁹

¹⁶ ‘Katalysator Unterhaltungskunst’

¹⁷ ‘Oft genug vergessen wir noch, daß man die Kunst nicht studiert, sondern genießt. Man verstehe das richtig: Wenn eine Kunst fade und langweilig ist, wird sie wirkungslos.’

¹⁸ Especially Alfred Kurella and Johannes R. Becher, both cultural theorists who returned from Muscovite exile after the Second World War, formulated the theoretical guidelines for appropriating culture in political terms. These principles enabled the newly founded East German state to reshape culture from the beginning, and, I argue, on the basis of performance reconstruction and appropriation. Propelled by the horrors of the Second World War, cultural politics were heralded and centrally coordinated to create a tangible imaginary for the teleological construction of a new society.

¹⁹ ‘Der Fortschritt der Menschheit beruht darauf, dass die kulturellen Errungenschaften (im weitesten Sinne) jeweils von den nachkommenden Geschlechtern übernommen und weitergebildet werden können. Die Besitzergreifung und Aneignung des kulturellen Erbes der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft erfolgt weiterhin kritisch, d.h. mit Auswahl. Dabei

Kurella's statement encapsulates several ideas that remained important to the Palast's revue practice throughout the GDR; essentially, it channelled the importance of methods of performance reconstruction for socialist world building. First, it placed socialist culture on a trajectory of progression away from a bourgeois past and towards a, yet to be defined, communist future. Second, this entailed a large amount of written interventions into how culture was to be understood and delineated from western kinds of performances. This loud class war existed mainly outside of the Palast, but nevertheless shaped the processes in the rehearsal rooms and the ways in which cultural aspects were chosen and eventually appropriated. Third, the ways in which appropriation happened changed over the decades and responded to party policy as well as to institutional drives. In this thesis, these processes are understood in terms of performance: within the socialist ideological framework, the Palast performed in a context of Marxist cultural strategies. These strategies eventually led to a specific reading of theatrical practice, which means that aesthetic behaviours were read by the socialists as material manifestations of ideology. These practices, which will be investigated further in the forthcoming chapters, remained the guiding artistic rationale for performance making in the Friedrichstadt-Palast until the late 1980s. At that time, the appropriated reconstructions of behaviour, according to former Palast dramaturg Wolfgang Tilgner²⁰, engendered a unique kind of revue aesthetic:

Concurrently, the socialist society and the liberation of the arts from the shackles of capital and [its] manipulation techniques unleash new forms and possibilities of artistic virtue. (...) While the capitalist entertainment industry only concedes entertainment to a relieving, marketizing function, the working class, in accordance with its aims and ideals, is interested in the fact that entertainment and culture coincide again and are placed at the service of socialist personality formation (1976:6)²¹.

verwandelt die sozialistische Gesellschaft das überkommene Kulturgut, indem sie es ihren historisch neuen höheren Kulturbedürfnissen anpasst und es dadurch weiterbildet. Die Kriterien für die kritische Auswahl aus dem bürgerlichen Kulturerbe sind nicht starr und nicht ein für allemal gegeben. Sie wandeln sich in der Praxis, im Zusammenhang mit den konkreten Kampf- und den Aufbauzielen, die der Sozialismus sich in den verschiedenen Etappen seiner Entwicklung stellt.' (I am indebted to Dr Stephan Ehrig for having pointed me towards a reprint of this excerpt in the programme booklet of Curt Trepte's 1961 staging of Heinrich von Kleist's *Käthchen von Heilbronn* at Harzer Bergtheater in Thale, which can be found at the Kleist Museum in Frankfurt/Oder.)

²⁰ Wolfgang Tilgner was the theatre's chief dramaturg between 1962 and 1983 (Carlé and Martens, 1987:143). He authored many critical analyses about the dramaturgical development of the genre, which are available in the archive. He authored many articles for the *Artistik* magazine to state his view about the alleged uniqueness of the genre.

²¹ 'Gleichzeitig setzt die sozialistische Gesellschaft mit der Befreiung der Künste von den Fesseln des Kapitals und der Manipulierungstechnik neue Formen und Möglichkeiten der Kunstwirkung frei. (...) Während die kapitalistische Vergnügungsindustrie der Unterhaltung lediglich eine entlastende, marketisierende Funktion zugesteht, ist die

In the chapters that follow, I delineate this aesthetic in more detail and explain how contexts of reception and production shape such ideological claims.

Throughout the existence of the GDR, the acquisition of a bourgeois stage form like the revue extravaganza was portrayed as extraordinarily challenging, because it required the socialist recoding of all of the parts that were united under the umbrella of the ‘entertainment arts’. Cultural scholars in the GDR have already acknowledged that the Friedrichstadt-Palast’s cultural heritage was a ‘difficult heritage’ (Carlé & Martens, 1987:26)²², because in its form of representation it was deeply rooted in bourgeois entertainments and a cosmopolitan imaginary of the human being. Precisely for that reason, the formation of a revue practice that was read as socialist and produced in what was perceived as an exclusively socialist context was necessary. In this context, the revue functioned as a socialist envelope: performance practices that it incorporated were first appropriated and then deemed socialist.



IMAGE 0.02. *Minirock und Riesenwelle* (February 1968). Staging of the socialist modernity as if it was just about to happen.

Arbeiterklasse entsprechend ihren Zielstellungen und Idealen daran interessiert, daß Unterhaltung und Kultur wieder zusammenfallen und in den Dienst der sozialistischen Persönlichkeitsbildung gestellt werden.'

²² 'schwieriges Erbe'

The artistic doctrine of socialist realism is an example of how ideology ordered the reconstruction of heritage, which was meant to form the new, socialist citizen. Marxist concepts of hope and futurity provided the philosophical horizon towards which behaviours were appropriated. Socialist realist performances usually expressed a forward-thrusting futurity, whose manifestation existed as art only, but not yet in the contemporaneous socialist reality. For example, image 0.02 shows a moment from the 1968 revue *Minirock und Riesenwelle* ('Miniskirt and Perm') that exhibits in a common revuesque v-shaped formation the dancers of the Friedrichstadt-Palast dressed in the latest fashion.²³ In the context of the Weimar revue extravaganza, *Minirock und Riesenwelle* could simply be construed as the presentation of contemporaneous fashions in relation to the prevailing economic system (Kothes, 1977:76-79). As a socialist revue, however, it also staged the overlapping of socialist art with socialist production, economics, and everyday life: it appears like a peak into a future of sartorial lavishness. Although the designs exhibited in the show stood in stark contrast to the actual shortages throughout the socialist country, the revue yet projected the idea of socialist sufficiency as a hopeful version of the present. These projections of a better near future were conveyed by the means of revue; that is, mass dances, rich décor, the ornamental distribution of bodies on the stage, and song recitals, amongst other markers. Futurity was therefore always an appropriated version of the past that was portrayed by means of the present (hence the cooperation with the East German fashion sector to represent the country's sartorial accomplishments in *Minirock & Riesenwelle*), because, in their own understanding, socialist societies aim at imagining futures that are distinguishable from the futures of the preceding bourgeois societies.

The restoration of behaviour was the strategy that connected the moving bodies of the revue with the doctrines of socialist realism and the larger project of forging a new society. In this thesis, I argue that artists were deemed 'engineers of the human soul' (Jäger, 1995:38)²⁴ precisely because they used methods

²³ This production was co-produced with the VVB Konfektion, that is, a collective of publicly owned enterprises in the sector of ready-to-wear clothing, to exhibit national fashion works. Fashion was organized centrally and distributed locally via Handelsorganisationen ('trade organisations').

²⁴ 'Ingenieure der menschlichen Seele'

of performance restoration and appropriation to ‘ideologically reshape and educate the workers’ (ibid:39).²⁵ They attempted to temper with the people’s sets of behaviour through the reception of art. Socialist realism was thus a means of configuring a socialist utopia that tainted renditions of the current socialist modern with a perspective of a more advanced revolution. Rühle called it an ‘artistic method to constructively acquire heritage’ (1952:3)²⁶ and thereby referred to the creative appropriation techniques associated with the acquisition of cultural heritage.

The revues of both Charell and the socialists in equal measure were always already a matter of simultaneous continuation and change. These revues were not just entirely of their respective presents, but carried marks of at least two times, that is, the time of that which was reconstructed and the time in which the reconstructions occurred. Using the ideas of American poet Gertrude Stein, performance scholar Rebecca Schneider conceptualised performance re-enactments as being an expression of syncopated time, which is ‘where *then* and *now* punctuate each other’ (emphasis in original, 2011:2). In a similar fashion, the reconstruction of practice always comprises a reconstruction of time and highlights the ways in which ‘then’ is also always a part of the ‘now’. Related to this thesis, it follows that, despite the ongoing forms of memory alteration, structures of East German performance are also a part of the Palast’s present revue performance. They thus create a certain belatedness. Where Charell’s sentimentality created a strange deferral of the past in his shows, the present Grand Shows of the Friedrichstadt-Palast expose similar forms of East German performance vocabularies that still charge the Palast’s increasingly global aesthetics. Revue performance is thus subject to a periodicity of recycling elements of practice. This thesis’s objective is to define them and make them visible.

²⁵ In the former Soviet countries, and Eastern Germany as one of the USSR’s satellites, ‘engineers of the human soul’ was used to describe the novelists’ role in the process of ideologisation by means of socialist realism (C. Vaughan, 1973; Scriven and Tate, 1988). Originally coined by Stalin, the expression first publicly surfaced in 1932 in the Russian Literary Newspaper *Literaturnaya Gazeta* (Jäger, 1995:38) and gained currency only two years later when Stalin’s cultural ideologue Andrei Zhdanov expanded on the term at the First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers (Zhdanov, 1998:525). Zhdanov demanded art to depict ‘reality in its revolutionary development’ (ibid), which involved a radical reinterpretation of history, culture and cultural products. For ‘engineers of the human soul’, see Brockmann, 2015:133-134. For debates amongst German writers about the implementation of socialist realism see Jäger, 1995:37-52/149-154; Emmerich, 2000:113-118. For socialist realism in theatre see Bradley, 2010:33,190-192; in dance see Giersdorf, 2013:49-84; Cramer, 2012.

²⁶ ‘Gestaltungsmethode zur schöpferischen Aneignung des Erbes’

Practice as a link between memory contests and theatre historiography

This thesis considers these continued underlying cultural practices as paradigms. As Branislav Jakovljević explains in relation to performance in the former Republic of Yugoslavia, performance paradigms are based on a ‘foundational design [that] presupposes, counterintuitively, a shift from general political theories to the specificity of embodied behaviour’ (2016:25). In relation to East German theatre practice, these paradigms steer how revue behaviours are restored to engender specific vernacular aesthetics. While these behaviours are ‘independent of the causal systems (personal, social, political, technological, etc.) that brought them into existence’ (Schechner, 2013:34), I think of performance paradigms as tendencies of aestheticisation that have developed over hundreds of revue performance restorations over the past decades. While this view implies that the revue is a behavioural continuum, as opposed to an end product that ostensibly represents the political system in which it came into being and as such becomes subject to a political assessment, it does not aim at eradicating these periodisations. As Richard Schechner points out, this approach allows one ‘to become as aware as possible of one’s own stances in relation to the positions of others’ (2013:2). From today’s perspective, however, to understand the Palast’s revue extravaganza as a syncopation of pre- and post-reunification revue practices challenges the chronopolitics of the German coming-to-terms-with the socialist past.

With a history as rich as the Palast’s, one might expect that the institution has a pronounced interest in the continuities that emanate from its past into its present in order to fictionalise the institution’s perspective. However, this would mean that the Palast constructively counters the persistent force of cultural narratives and contribute to the pluralism of memory. The opposite is the case. The collective forgetting about the institution’s socialist history has been a consequence not only of temporal distance, but also of the interpretation of the country’s history in primarily political terms. This involves the interpretation of Palast performance in terms of memory and the related discourses of political (de-)legitimation; practice and the cultural archives it creates still remain secondary in the analysis of East German culture. Instead, the concepts through which the East German state has been understood since reunification are, according to historian Michael Brie, the politically charged ‘terms “unjust state,” “totalitarian society,” or “SED dictatorship”’ (1994:7). Historically, this is because, as has been argued by Paul Cooke, during the early years

of coming-to-terms with the GDR's legacy, the appointed Enquete Commission²⁷ primarily focused on structures of oppression; their reading of the past 'was more about furthering a western political agenda than about exploring the complexity of life in the GDR' (2005:43) and manifested how the GDR was understood post-reunification. The totalitarian argument has even been brand-marked as a form of 'emotionally-charged anti-Communism' (Borgwardt, 2002:65) according to which the GDR's culture has widely been understood through the moment of the country's demise. When East Germany acceded to the Federal Republic of Germany, it was seen as the loser of Cold War struggles between East and West Germany and a collective renunciation of its legacy became a matter of the political legitimisation of the reunified country under Western narration.

This view is characteristic for the early post-reunification period, but the academic and public discourse have since moved on to examine other forms of telling history that paint a richer image of life and culture in the GDR.²⁸ These dynamic engagements with polyvocal portrayals of multiple pasts have created hotly contested discourses in which retrospective imagination and selected fact frame what culture scholars Anne Fuchs and Mary Cosgrove called "memory contests". It "puts emphasis on a pluralistic memory culture which does not enshrine a particular normative understanding of the past but embraces the idea that individuals and groups advance and edit competing stories about themselves that forge their changing sense of identity" (2006a:164). The Palast's continued silencing of East German memory further concretises a popular understanding of East German historiography that, since the Enquet commission's description of the GDR as a totalitarian dictatorship²⁹, has been at the basis of the theatre's contemporary activities.

Initially coined in the works by Hannah Arendt and Carl J. Friedrich in response to Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Soviet Union,³⁰ the concept of totalitarianism has been discussed by philosopher

²⁷ A parliamentary commission of enquiry formed by the Bundestag which surveyed GDR history in its entirety. It was heavily critiqued for its generalizing assumptions about GDR culture. For the Enquete commission see Cooke, 2005:27-59; Jones, 2014:9-12.

²⁸ Peter Grieder further analysed different models, e.g. totalitarianism, dictatorship, participatory dictatorship (Grieder, 2012:1-18). Sara Jones analysed the discourse around the totalitarian argument in relation to the GDR scholarship (Jones, 2011:1-31). For authentic perspectives on everyday life in East Germany, see Pence and Betts, 2008; Saunders and Pinfold, 2013.

²⁹ For discussions on the applicability of the concept of totalitarianism to the GDR, see Kohl, 2009; Ross, 2002:19-43; Clarke and Wölfel, 2011:12-13; Jones, 2011:1-14; Jones, 2014:1-4.

³⁰ For interpretations of their work in relation to East Germany see Cooke, 2005: 41-44 and Jones, 2011:2-8.

Slavoj Žižek as a ‘the key weapon of the West in the Cold War ideological struggle’ (2001:2). It is thus a ‘stopgap’ (ibid) that created a ‘*Denkverbot* (prohibition against thinking)’ (ibid:3), impeding scholars from more fully understanding the cultural processes that the totalitarian argument seeks to conceal. In relation to the GDR, this view causes ‘a political dispute, since the opposing political protagonists are using and abusing history as a means to power’ (Brie, 1994:13). The most salient aspect of this interpretation of history is that it “emphasizes a structural or functional perspective on history that takes little interest in personal life stories” (Fuchs and Cosgrove, 2006b:6), or, as in this thesis’ case, performance practice.

In fact, these early post-reunification discourses about the GDR have only extended an understanding of the country that had long been established in the West. The GDR has since its inception been regarded as a politically illegitimate state. Historically, the formation of the GDR was seen as having been caused by the ‘extension of Soviet influence on German soil after 1945’ (Jesse, 1994:162), which made the formation of the socialist country an illegitimate act in the first place. The fact that the GDR was only accepted as a nation state by the United Nations in 1973, that is, twenty-four years after it was founded, confirms that the country’s outside view had always been shaped by notions of illegitimacy. In West Germany, according to journalist Franziska Augstein, this form of delegitimisation was symbolically signified by putting the acronym ‘GDR’ in quotation marks (2009:452). Even having called the country ‘Zone (‘zone’), ‘drüben (‘over there’), or ‘Gebilde (‘construct’)’ underlined the view of the GDR as, what Thomas Lindenberger has described as the ‘epitome of *Uneigentlichkeit*, an unreal existence’ (emphasis in original; 2010:29). The process of delegitimising the GDR’s culture continued after re-unification, as was argued by political scientist Eckhard Jesse: ‘[a]n ongoing delegitimisation of the former state apparatus is without alternative, because a democracy must also integrate the advocates of the old system’ (1994:169). Continually developing derivatives of the same argument still maintain this imbalance: according to political scientist Jan-Werner Müller, the application of the highly charged political term *Unrechtsstaat* to describe the GDR further ‘implies a state lacking the rule of law, but it also suggests one systematically perpetrating injustice, or even founded on injustice’ (2009:335).

In her study on theatre censorship in the GDR, Laura Bradley diversified our understanding of East German theatre by extending Mary Fulbrook’s concept of the GDR as a ‘participatory dictatorship’, emphasising people’s widespread participation in what had been termed ‘democratic centralism’ (Fulbrook,

2005: n.p.). The concept expresses ‘the ways in which the people themselves were at one and the same time both constrained and affected by, and yet also actively and often voluntarily carried, the ever changing social and political system of the GDR’ (ibid). Although systems of control were implemented as structures of governance ranging from the highest levels of the government into the grassroots organisation within institutions, Bradley shows how GDR discourses emphasized socialist planning, leadership, and management of cultural processes, while denying that censorship was practised. However, there are still questions to be asked as to what extent these forms of performance making in the GDR manifested in theatrical practice. While in her analysis she relies on documents that were written about the performances, performance itself is not used as an archive. In this thesis I show that performance in East Germany is, however, just another archive that historians have not known how to read. Performance is thus also a site of memory contests that extend into contemporary forms of the genre. Read in these terms, they allow us to describe East German theatre performance aesthetics and their legacies, especially when we leave the domain of text-based theatre.

Since I understand practice as a passing-on of behaviours and specific ways of showing doing, I am interested in that which continued across the moments that the Palast still conceptualises as breaks. While outside the institution, this understanding of history has already been challenged, it remains an iconoclastic act with regards to the theatrical institution that thinks it has terminated its relationship with the GDR. Principally, this means that a bottom-up, rather than a top-down approach to assessing GDR culture is necessary. Historian Konrad H. Jarausch has argued that ‘generalizing harshly about the fundamental illegitimacy of the East German regime’ (1997:54) resulted in the concomitant delegitimization of East German culture: art was regarded as state art and thus also considered illegitimate. This implied ‘the discrediting of everything East German and the demand for its replacement with superior Western practices’ (ibid). In order to shift the focus to the configuration of the institution’s performance practice, that is, its tendencies of aestheticisation, from before and after German reunification, the body to body transmission of knowledge, experience and behaviours, need to be re-assessed.

In the early 1990s, the reappraisal of the GDR aimed at constructing a consensual conception of history in order to achieve ‘something called “inner unity” among German citizens’ (Müller, 2009:340), that apparently did not include performance and behaviours. The discourse as such thus only alters memory and

reconfigures how we think about the GDR. Wolfgang Emmerich argues that such a reconfiguration of memory ‘forms identity both by outward demarcations and inward obligation’ (2009:244): in order to see the GDR as having ended, the reunified Germany under western narration had to uphold a biased memory culture. Although Germany’s cultural institutions, including the Friedrichstadt-Palast, consolidate and canonise this thinking through their promises and obligations, their behaviours do not always correspond with the intentions of these early approaches to reappraisal: The Friedrichstadt-Palast, I argue, still relies on aestheticized behaviours, that could have been deemed illegitimate, but because its memory is increasingly written out of the institution’s self-conception and contexts of reception have shifted, these paradigms have continued to exist as unconscious forms of behaviour that have since reunification developed and converged with the values and attitudes of an increasingly globally operating show business aesthetics. But they are still there. While the contemporary Palast is shaped by memory cultures of the GDR, which have, according to Katrin Kohl, ‘transmuted into a verbal form’ (2009:266), the very materiality of the institution’s aesthetic doings exceeded verbal forms of return, recollection, or retrospection. Seen through the lens of performance, formerly East German behaviours of revue production can be discussed as having resisted this rhetoric, because they continued as embodied behaviours and patterns of thinking.

In this respect, the sudden political change during German reunification is noteworthy, because it, too, further describes how exactly the Palast forgot about its GDR legacy. Culture scholar Paul Cooke has described reunification as the ‘quasi colonial “subjugation” of the east by the west’ (Cooke, 2005:2). Based on a study by Wolfgang Dümcke and Fritz Vilmar, who conceptualised reunification as ‘the destruction of an “indigenous” economic structure’ (1996:13), Cooke argues that reunification from a Western perspective was seen as the accession of the east to the west. Self-evidently, discussing German reunification in the terms of colonialism is highly problematic, as reunification can by far not be compared to the pillaging and murdering actions of colonialisng powers.³¹ Nevertheless, as Cooke points out, it has remained ‘a fitting metaphor to describe [...] the economic and social subjugation of the former GDR by the FRG’ (2005:3). He quotes an address by the Minister of Interior of the Federal Republic of Germany, Wolfgang Schäuble,

³¹ Lyn Marven, for example, adds that there was also a high degree of exchange of East German culture into the West resulting in the convergence of values and attitudes that challenge postcolonial readings of the GDR, see Marven, 2009:302.

to the former citizens of the GDR, who spelled out that reunification for East Germans entailed an immediate shift in mind-set and an automatic subjugation:

My dear citizens, what is taking place here is the accession of the GDR to the Federal Republic, and not the other way around. We have a good *Grundgesetz* (Basic Law), which has proved its worth. We will do everything for you. You are very welcome to join us. We do not wish callously to ignore your wishes and interests. However, we are not seeing here the unification of two equal states. We are not starting again from the beginning, from positions that have equal rights. The *Grundgesetz* exists, and the Federal Republic exists. (in Cooke, 2005:4)

Read in the terms of performance, Schäuble's view is important to recognise, because it marks the moment when East German culture became subaltern in post-reunification Germany, because '[d]ue to the disappearance of the GDR as a separate state, the abrupt changes threatened many Easterners with a loss of identity' (Jarausch, 1997:19). Schäuble's view is a view from outside and demands from East Germans that they assume a political position with a yet-to-be-defined, or, one could also say, without a further-defined cultural identity that recognised the total experience of having lived in East Germany.³² The emphasis here is on the direction through which this blend of values and attitudes was supposed to proceed: although East Germans certainly wished for these new western influences to structure their future, their readiness to combine their own individual experiences with new influences was overridden by West German politicians naturalising this specific configuration of the adaptation of behaviours. Former East German citizens' behaviours, as Richard Schechner would put it, had to be exchanged for kinds of behaviour that were yet unknown to them. In the political break and the concomitant new periodisation of before and after reunification, 'the German federal government saw it as its place to welcome the new eastern members into its fold, rather than to merge with the GDR' (Cooke, 2005:4). Through the totalitarian consensus through which the GDR was reappraised, formerly 'sedimented matters of course and routines of daily life were devalued and were meant to be replaced by new behavioural standards and patterns of orientation' (Hettlage and Lenz, 1995:17-18).

Despite the politically constructed break, culture persisted. In their provisional appraisal of German reunification, Robert Hettlage and Karl Lenz acknowledged that despite the prevailing memory discourses

³² In its academic context, subaltern studies are an intervention in South Asian studies as an attempt to form a post-colonial historiography (Prakash, 1994:1477). I appropriate the term in the context of reading German reunification as a quasi-colonial moment. For the subaltern as colonial subject, see Spivak, 1988. For 'position without identity', see Spivak, 2007.

and aims to construct a clear break, ‘a high and frequently underestimated amount of *continuation*’ (emphasis in original, *ibid*:18) characterised East Germany post-reunification. Structurally, as has been argued by Traute Schölling, East German theatres in the post-reunification era continued receiving subsidies to continue, thus preserve, their institutions’ operations. The Unification Treaty even mentioned that ‘cultural substance [...] must not be damaged’ (in Schölling, 1993:21). Coincidentally, revue practice was also seen as continuous and not subject to the political regimes under which they formed. When asked whether revue performance after reunification was still the same as before, Emil Neupauer, a stage director at the Friedrichstadt-Palast, replied in 1992:

What else is it supposed to be? The great art forms of variety and cabaret didn’t just stop after the twenties; at least not here. In this theatre, something unique grew out of this. Everyone who doesn’t realise this is ignorant. (in Walter, 1992:17)

Just after reunification, there seemed to have been an awareness that practice continued across the political shift from socialism to capitalism, but the ensuing denigration of the GDR created a rhetoric that periodised this form of continuity as a political break. In these concepts, performance still remains unaddressed.

Underlying all chapters is the idea that pre-reunification strategies of Marxist performance acquisition and appropriation were not too different from the early forms of the post-reunification memory contests. Both concepts, to different extents, have reshaped memories of behaviours and thus altered notions of time. These cultural interventions have also shaped the identity of the Friedrichstadt-Palast. While Marxist performance strategies have consciously reshaped strips of performance and created unique performance aesthetics over the roughly 40 years of their operation, these strategies were increasingly forgotten after reunification. They still helped reproduce and develop these strips of behaviour post-reunification while it adapted global performance vocabularies, as I will explain in chapter 4.

In this thesis, I unmute these silenced histories by examining the institutional history in an attempt to re-conceptualise what East German performance was and how it still affects performance in reunified Germany. This is why discourses of performances, rather than memory, shape the remainder of this thesis. While the Palast still prolongs an early 1990s stance towards its history, this thesis will look at performance paradigms as tendencies of aestheticisation. This requires sources that are different from those that current studies have focussed on. Theatre historian Petra Stuber has argued that the ‘[t]he greatest crux of the GDR’s historiography’ (2000:181) is that the vast majority of the available materials reinsert a view of the

GDR as a society exclusively organised through a top-down approach of censorship and control. The continual focus on the Stasi files is the most prominent signifier of totalitarianism in the GDR. The records of the Ministry for State Security (MfS, or Stasi), that is, the GDR's secret police, were written in the context of the repressive control systems and the agendas of the MfS. The usefulness of these files has been severely contested, as they impose a form of historicisation that follows the reading of culture through the reprimands of the political sphere only.³³ They focus on dissent and people who, in the eyes of the Stasi, posed a threat to the socialist systems. On the one hand, the Stasi was meant to preserve the East German political system by identifying its opponents and launching actions to eradicate those. On the other hand, and quite ironically, in the files they compiled they neither considered nor analysed their country's cultural or societal achievements, despite the fact that it was due to those achievements that the country was able to form a vernacular culture and relative longevity. As a result, they cannot provide a sufficient understanding of the GDR's cultural production that would enhance an understanding of the cultural mechanisms that operated during or continued to operate beyond the point in history at which the Stasi ceased to exist. Throughout the chapters of this thesis, reflections on the Palast revue between 1947 and 1990 thus aim to add polyvocal perspectives to the East German memory contests by understanding culture bottom-up from within the GDR, that is, as an intersection of a creative doing and socialist doctrines of art making.

Although the larger part of this dissertation deals with the performance histories of the Friedrichstadt-Palast, my enquiries are fuelled by the pressures that the East German revue's performance paradigms exert on contemporary revue productions, although these relations remain unacknowledged today. The significance of this dissertation is thus three-fold. First, it starts discussing the revue extravaganza as shaped under socialism in the terms of performance practice, which, secondly, allows for a revaluation of revue practices regardless of the attempts to deligitimise them. The relation between present and past ideas, practices, and forms of doing is essentially, as Jacques Derrida put it, 'a question of the future, the question of the future itself, the question of a response, or a promise and of a responsibility for tomorrow' (1995:36). The continual influence of a particular side of the German memory contests does not account

³³ Mary Fulbrook, for example, argued that simplifying aspects of the dictatorship on the basis of Stasi files does not help in understanding how actual social relations and mechanism are peculiarities of the system, which transferred its ideology through culture (Fulbrook, 1996:275).

for the very materiality that behaviours of different temporalities create day after day on the stage at Friedrichstraße 107. Thus, thirdly, this thesis provides approaches with the help of which the reverberation of the ostensibly paradigmatic practices can be made visible again. This happens in order to enable revue practitioners to work more consciously with the history that is deemed to be ignored and to allow historians to understand revue as an archive in its own right. In this sense, this dissertation goes against the grain of the Palast's current ambitions: where the Palast goes global and measures itself with systems of international show productions, this thesis goes local and searches for different forms of contact with the past in order to make sense of the present. Instead of furthering the failed state argument, this thesis looks from within and examines the reasons for the theatre's enduring activities in the staging of revue extravaganza's over more than 70 years since the end of World War II; it acknowledges socialist revue performance from the perspective of its artistic ambitions, rather than its ceased state ideology.

Views & materials

In this thesis, the revue extravaganza as a form of aestheticised reconstruction of performance is the underlying behaviour that connects the above-mentioned forms of periodisation and is therefore a form of practice that was shaped from the bottom in a response to contextual conditions. My understanding of the revue as primarily a form of stage practice has formed since my first internship in the Palast's production department in 2008, during which I assisted Corinna Druve, the director of the seasonal revue *Sommerrevue* ('Summer Revue'). While researching past productions in literature and various archives was primarily a historical task, my enquiries were highly informed through my practical work in preparing revues and helping to stage them at the Friedrichstadt-Palast. Having returned to the Palast for several more productions in the capacity of freelance assistant to the creative directors and stage directors, I have started to think about my enquiries into the theatre's past through practice. Observing and understanding theatre makers and performers in their daily routines contextualised my historical research and increased my understanding of what it means to make work as part of such a large network of people and processes. Many times, I had walked from the edge of the apron stage into the upper wings. It is a walk that can easily take 40 seconds or more when working on major revues with the main cast that run for several years. It can also take over a minute, when working with the Palast's youth ensemble on seasonal children's revues,

because their legs are shorter and they are themselves massively overwhelmed by the stage's enormous scale. That is to say that making revue was not only intellectual work, but it was also shaped by the makers' and performers' visceral response to the space and mundane everyday occurrences, amongst many other things. Understanding through my own body what it meant to aestheticize cultural references for different staging formats on the same stage does not mean that I aim to generalise from my own experience. But since these moments have always shaped my enquiries and provided me with a historical imagination that can read into sources the quality of ideas, staging methods, and can anticipate problems that might have been encountered in their making, my work at the Palast has indeed broadened perspectives onto archive material and ideas of syncopation, reconstruction, and returns. Historical imagination, however, also comes with specific restriction, because the past is seen through contemporary practices and was, with the help of detailed information gained from production notes and prompt books, adjusted. Being aware of this temporal distance, I applied historical imagination cautiously, always being aware of production-related differences and developments.

The main objective of this thesis' research is to recover context, that is, perspectives on practice and views on how aestheticisations on the stage function. Tracy C. Davis points out that "context" is doomed to incompleteness' (2004:206). Seemingly disjointed fragments of historical evidence yet help to create a 'convexity' (ibid:205) within which the researcher's enquiries are animated and assume a form. Although I conducted formal interviews with current and former Palast choreographers, the most valuable information I received was in chats during rehearsal, in the canteen, or during social events. My work as a professional creative producer at the Palast propelled my interest in the first place, but also allowed me to participate in processes and gossip, converse with eye witnesses, and shape ways of thinking that have informed this project. When talking to theatre makers who also worked in the GDR, it was important to remember that some of the information I found in the archive might have been unknown to them, as parts of the censorship and reviewing processes were, during the times of the GDR, usually covert operations and therefore concealed for them. That is why approaching the revue as evidence of practice evolved as the main thread. Reading revue history through labour, and by proxy through the practitioners I have spoken to over the past 9 years, has opened a window into reading revue practice from many different perspectives. It became apparent that dancers and choreographers understood practice as pieces of work they had once

delivered and which were accessible to them at any time: practice, to them, was indeed conceptualised as strips of behaviour that were restorable when a certain effect was needed. There was less of a consciousness that dancing was directly affected by changing ideologies, as current forms of periodisation want to make us believe. By contrast, dramaturgs and creative directors infused a temporal thinking of progress, often expressed through phrases like ‘back then’ or ‘[this imagined scenario] is where we want to be’. Ideologies of innovation were the main drivers in these conversations and new shows were generally discussed as allegedly breaking new artistic ground within the institutional context. As I will further describe in chapter four, not all of my interlocutors shared my perspective that contemporary performance practices still produce residues of specific East German aestheticisations.



IMAGES 0.03-05. The archive of the Friedrichstadt-Palast (October 2014). **03.** A panoramic view capturing the image file cabinets on the left, the poster shelves in the middle, the press clipping folders in back, and the programme booklets on the right. **04.** Erich Honecker's portrait watches every person who enters the archive. **05.** Boxes of unsorted material in front of the production files of shows between 1970-1999.

This thesis understands the revue as a stage form that is heavily based in forms of practices, which are embodied or conveyed through means of staging or framing. The *Artistik* magazine, founded in 1955, is the main point of establishing the context for further research in the Friedrichstadt-Palast's own institutional archive.³⁴ The magazine was the monthly publication (1954-1990) of the arts union's department for the entertainment arts and provided editorials written by functionaries that provided political context. As the articles were written by theatre directors, theatre practitioners, and critics, they provide a plethora of discursive threads. For example, the articles in the magazine mirror the institutional shift from variety to revue theatre in the 1960s, which I describe in chapter 2. The articles are thus a useful barometer of thought that helped me understand how Marxist performance practice worked toward a specific horizon of futurity, which was to be expressed through performance. It involved shifting the focus from viewing the Friedrichstadt-Palast revue as a number of theatrical entertainments towards understanding it in terms of practice, that is, the restoration of behaviours, which in their acts of restoration were appropriated according to ongoing conversation about the revue's art forms.

The macro view was complemented by a plethora of material from the Friedrichstadt-Palast's own institutional archive that helped restore perspectives on day-to-day interactions and practice.³⁵ The archive is located between the third and fourth floor of the theatre, just as if it was never meant to exist. It is located right on the staircase that leads to the flies. One enters through a big iron door and is then welcomed by a portrait of the former Head of State of East Germany, Erich Honecker (see image 0.05). As I was told by the former creative director, Roland Welke, this portrait was a leftover from the theatre director's office from during the GDR. Although I had not noticed his portrait during my first visit, I met Honecker's eyes right upon entry on my second visit. As with a lot of other material in the archive during my first visit, I saw

³⁴ I elaborate the cultural importance of the *Artistik* magazine in chapter 2.1.

³⁵ I also consulted the circus, variety, and cabaret collection of the municipal museum of Berlin (Spandau) and the Landesarchiv Berlin, which provided programme booklets and production-related information on the history of Großes Schauspielhaus before 1945. The Spandau collection also houses the Nachlass of Wolf Leder, principal costume and stage designer at the Palast between 1954 and 1992. In order to base my findings in a global context, I visited Grant Philipo's Las Vegas Showgirl Museum, a private collection located in Paradise Palms, Nevada, that holds 30,000 artifacts and 1,000 mannequins adorned with original costumes from Las Vegas and Parisian revues. To review the British and French traditions of revue and cabaret, I consulted the The Mander & Mitchenson Theatre Collection in Bristol, UK.

it, I knew that it represented the past that was allegedly bad, and thus ignored it. The way I had met his portrait during my first visit was a representation of how GDR history relates to the whole building: it is everywhere, and apparently nobody had asked why, what it did, or what it still does. While this perception also goes for many other sites and places and their respective histories, at the Friedrichstadt-Palast, this perception is, as I have been arguing, related to specific forms of doing. Both go unacknowledged.

The archive is not indexed in any way.³⁶ During my first visits, I produced a rudimentary finding aid that built on the guidance of Roland Welke, and an initial survey of all the material available. Much of the material is from the institution's 45-year history in the GDR. In the chapters that follow, I attempt to give as much information as possible so documents can be found by future scholars; that includes information about the names of folders, total number of pages, or version number of the draft cited.

In the GDR, the archive was called Zentralarchiv des Friedrichstadt-Palastes ('central archive'), because it functioned as a node between the several administrative layers at the Palast and the implementation of state control measures. In the Friedrichstadt-Palast's archive regulations from 1981, the reason for keeping rich records was attributed to the societal and ideological importance of the Palast's development. In fact, it reveals a consciousness that there was a noticeable relation between the socialist development of the country and the mastering of the cultural processes of acquisition and appropriation:

All documents and objects which, because of their social value as a source of knowledge of historical facts and processes, are to be extrapolated and kept permanently independent of the form of ownership to allow the evaluation of especially political, ideological, scientific, legal, economic, cultural, and educational coherences. Because of its valuable information, it is part of the historical development of this society and its uniqueness, and

³⁶ Until it is once again moved, here is a rough map of the objects in the archive. Upon entry, on the right-hand side, there is a row of filing cabinets holding thousands of images and programme booklets from revues between 1945 to the mid-1990s, architectural images of the old and the new Palast, images of rehearsals, guest appearances, and cast members. All images are organized in suspension files, ordered by year, and labelled accordingly. There are occasional gaps. Above the file cabinets, there are two shelves with leather albums that each contain a programme booklet and images documenting the order of the tableaux of the respective revue; they range from the early 1950s to the mid-1970s. Above them, there are unlabelled boxes of diapositive slides and boxes of unlabelled pictures of what seemed like staff and crew events. The shelf in the middle of the room contains hundreds of production posters. The shelf on the right-hand side right upon entry consists of box files, labelled by year, containing programme booklets of productions since the reopening of the Palast in 1984. The shelves on the right-hand side contain folders of press clippings for each production since the early 1960s. Next to the press clippings are records on finished productions, like prompt books and production folders with drawings of the set and costumes, technical drawings, and stage layouts of most shows from between 1970 and 1999.

is therefore a concrete link to the cultural heritage and is legally protected and inalienable.
(in Struck, 1981:3)³⁷

According to this definition, the Palast was meant to deduce a relation to its past and use it to evaluate the cultural significance of its contemporaneous cultural production. Socialist progress was measured as performance and in terms of performance. Where the archive spared an answer as to how exactly this had ever been carried out, this thesis attempts to elaborate on this point.³⁸

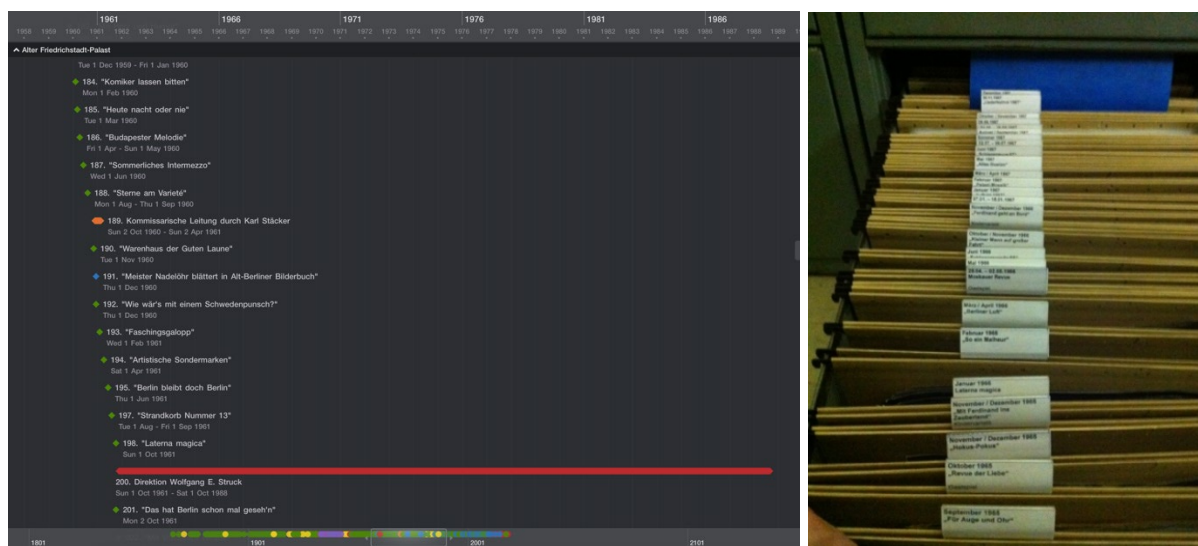
Unfortunately, there are no comprehensive, written accounts of the theatre's repertoire history. I used Aeon Timeline, a software for writers of fictions and crime novels, that allows dates to be related to events, persons, and other coherences to create a nexus of what the filing cabinets provided and what my contextual research delivered. This database currently comprises approximately 500 entries, including major and minor shows, children's revues, experimental matinees, one-off gala revues, touring productions, and institutional events, like changes in management. This work, although not complete, is still appended as a provisional timeline (see Appendix 1). As a methodological tool, it helped in gaining a perspective on the hundreds of revues that the Palast has produced since 1945, which allowed me to relate political events and form of periodising time to the production schedules of the theatre.

While producing the timeline, I reviewed the production photographs and programme booklets in order to gain an understanding of how the revue, its aesthetics, ideas, dramaturgical structures, and staging methods changed over the decades. Where I could, I triangulated images with records on finished productions, like prompt books and production folders with drawings of sets and costumes, technical drawings, and stage layouts of most shows from between 1970 and 1999, in order to reanimate productions for the analyses that follow. These materials were important to get an idea about how the revues were

³⁷ 'Gesamtheit der Dokumente, Unterlagen und Gegenstände, die wegen ihres gesellschaftlichen Wertes als Quelle der Erkenntnis historischer Tatsachen und Prozesse in Archiven konzentriert, dauernd aufzubewahren sind, unabhängig von der Eigentumsform, und für die Auswertung vor allem zu politisch-ideologischen, wissenschaftlichen, rechtlichen, ökonomischen und kulturellen sowie erzieherischen Zwecken gesichert, erschlossen und bereitgestellt werden. Es gehört wegen seines wertvollen Informationsgehaltes über die historische Entwicklung der Gesellschaft und wegen seiner Einmaligkeit in einem konkreten Überlieferungszusammenhang zum Kulturgut und ist gesetzlich geschützt und unveräußerlich.' (In the document, there is no date given, except that the Palast's archival regulations are based on the model ordinance for archives in the GDR from 22 December 1980, to be in effect from 1981. There are several versions. According to the latest version, the regulation agreement commenced on 1 September 1987.)

³⁸ Until 1985, the keeper of the archive was the theatre's production manager (Heinrich Martens, between 1964-1985). From 1985 onwards until after reunification, it was the head dramaturg. Nowadays, it is the creative director, which, in theory, confers a certain importance to the archive and relates the theatre's performance histories to today's cultural production through an administrative nexus.

supposed to work on the stage. Descriptions of stage processes, effects, rehearsal notes, and meeting protocols helped understand that the Palast approached revue in the context of socialist entertainment arts. A revue was a rendezvous with different kinds of practice, references, and processes related to large stage apparatuses and large casts. Considering that this information could have been changed in the actual production of the revue, I triangulated it with the production photographs from file cabinets, and further animated these descriptions by press reviews and opinion pieces.



IMAGES 0.06-07. Reconstructing the production history. 06. Aeon Time and the production history of the Palast. **07.** Labelled suspension files in file cabinet.

I was also interested in the horizons towards which all this had been geared, and the repeating structures of thought that led to productions like the ones discussed in this thesis. The aspects I was most interested in were finding out about how the ideas of these revues were expressed, how they developed, and who was responsible for their genesis, as I thought this might answer my questions about how the Palast chose what to acquire and appropriate by means of revue performance. In the back of the room I found the administrative records of the former dramaturg's office. These include short-term and long-term planning documents, like repertoire proposals for the upcoming season, and five- or ten-year-plans that lay out the theatre's intended development. These were mostly addressed to municipal authorities and are a form of pre-performance control of repertoire and, in the case of the Palast, its aesthetics.³⁹ These documents are complemented by reports on the repertoire development, infrastructural problems, as well

³⁹ I am borrowing the term 'pre-performance control' from Laura Bradley's study on East German theatre censorship (Bradley, 2010:1:24).

as successes (usually titled *Rechenschaftsbericht*) and end of season letters from the theatre's manager to the staff and crew. These latter documents in particular were of greatest interest, because they were mostly used internally and operated in close vicinity to rehearsal room conversations and the daily labours of revue re-imagination.

In-between those files, I often found concepts for revues that were never realised. Some exist in various drafts and carbon copies. Compiled in unnamed folders, there is a large number of documents that relate to institutional symposiums on the creative development of the Palast, economic conferences, preparatory meetings for Party conferences, theatre renovations and their artistic implications. These documents dealt with the artistic development of the theatre in terms of socialist contexts in which the development of entertainment had been approached in an almost scientific fashion. Most of these documents have informed the narratives of this thesis and are referenced accordingly.

During my research, I have consulted many other archives. The holdings of the theatre collection of the Municipal Museum of Berlin contain material from the 1920s to the formation of the Variety Theatre after the Second World War. Despite the fact that it also contains the legacy of former Palast designer Wolf Leder, the collection does not contain any internal planning documents or work documents. The archive of the Akademie der Künste also could not produce any new materials to my case studies. If other researchers would like to explore the history of the Friedrichstadt-Palast's second, small stages (*Das Ei* at the Old Palast and *Die Kleine Revue* at the New Palast), they will be able to find plenty of image material that I was not able to locate in the institutional archive. In terms of the theatre's reconstruction in Chapter 3, I rely on Florian Urban's research of the matter in the Stasi files and contrast it with the rich collection of documents I located in the institutional archive to offer a counter narrative to his top-down approach.

Videos of newer productions have helped to gain a better understanding of timing, transitions, entries and exits, in particular. Taped video recordings exist, but are currently not accessible due to decay. I was able to watch private and rehearsal recordings from creative staff in order to gain a better understanding for revues of the early 2000s. The Palast archive is currently being digitized to enter the archive of the Akademie der Künste, but due to lack of funding it is a very slow process and likely to take several years before completion. The digitization of film reels and VHS is complicated. A few moving images of the socialist revues in the Old and the new Friedrichstadt-Palast can be found as part of documentaries about

the Friedrichstadt-Palast's history.⁴⁰ Some of these were samples on YouTube, together with televised recordings of Palast revues and performances. These were accessed in 2015 and 2016, but have disappeared already due to copyright infringement.⁴¹

Thesis structure and scope

Each chapter approaches the Friedrichstadt-Palast revue through the prism of practice and thereby reflects on concepts of performance restoration from different perspectives. Chapter 1 is about dramaturgies, chapter 2 about moving bodies, chapter 3 about stage technologies, and chapter 4 is about the relations between past, present, and future.

Chapter 1 discusses the revue extravaganza as a medium that reconstructs ideas about the city of Berlin and the medium of the revue itself. Over the past seven decades, revues have reconstructed images of how Berlin as a place and thus as a number of cultural references has been understood in their respective times. In another trajectory of productions, the revue itself, its development and its practices became historicised and aestheticized for the big stage. The chapter tunes the reader to the ideological and aesthetic influences on dramaturgical structures and means of literal meaning making. It analyses concepts of Marxist cultural acquisition and appropriation in the terms of performance reconstruction. It makes clear that there are similar themes that existed in both socialist and post-socialist revue. Although this chapter discusses how German reunification has impacted the reconstructions of Berlin in the revues, it suspends notions of memory contests in order to draw out the lines of the conscious reconstructions of ideas and narrative principles.

The next two chapters reflect the institutional development and how practices of Marxist cultural acquisition and appropriation have developed between 1950 and 1990. Having been heavily struck during the Second World War, the Großes Schauspielhaus had never been fully restored to function as a *Volltheater*, a fully functional theatre. As a result, it was a venue rather than a stage of illusion. Due to the lack of material

⁴⁰ See Metzger, 2006.

⁴¹ For a collection of videos available online, see n.a., 2017:[online].

means and in line with aesthetics of socialist realism, the Palast understood revue primarily in terms of bodily labour and appropriated the moving bodies to express socialist affects.

Chapter 2 starts from a misconception about the socialist body by revisiting current and past perceptions of a ‘socialist handstand’, that is, a quote given by former Palast director Gottfried Herrmann. Although it had been continuously denied that there was indeed a distinct Marxist physical practice, practitioners as well as theoreticians have always tried to imbue the moving body with socialist values. Today, these discourses have largely been forgotten, which has led to false assumptions about East German physical revue practice. I review the developments of the Palast revue during the 1950s and 1960s by considering the relationship between socialist futurity and movement practice. The chapter ends with an analysis of how these earlier developments led to a growing cultural conservatism during the 1970s and ultimately resulted in the closing of the old Friedrichstadt-Palast in 1980.

While the old theatre, the former Großes Schauspielhaus, decayed, the revue makers at the Palast, amongst them choreographers, set designers, directors, and dramaturgs, developed concepts for a new theatre. In 1984, the first revue in the new Friedrichstadt-Palast premiered. Chapter 3 starts where Palast practice commenced again after the closing of the old Palast. It analyses the concepts of staging a new kind of highly technologized revue extravaganza. Having learned how to employ a dialectical staging of space, the Palast increasingly diverged from socialist realism, but still employed Marxist cultural concepts to design the staging of its shows. The chapter finishes with a review of the documents that evidence the process of finding a form for the new theatre that destabilises current assumptions that the Palast was built in ‘the context of the decaying socialist state’ (Urban, 2015:219). Seeing the rebuilding of the Palast as just another step to acquiring its past, the new theatre is in fact a materialisation of Marxist appropriation techniques. The efforts of practitioners in developing their art form were exploited by the state that provided the funds, but the underlying ideas were not of state-socialist intent, but subject to Marxist dialectical thinking. As such, the new Palast emerges not as a new chapter of performance making, but rather as a very linear form of performance continuation.

Chapter 4 starts in the present and analyses the Palast’s contemporary identity as a purveyor of revue productions that compete with other global shows. It examines the institution’s relation to both the Las Vegas production show and the production methods of its own past and thereby calls out the

unacknowledged post-socialist production paradigms. These largely unrecognised production paradigms may have created what is now referred to as a typically Berlin kind of revue, but they also impede the institution's own futurity. Understanding the Palast revue as a form of theatrical behaviours rather than an heir of a totalitarian system proves much more productive in cherishing the Palast's past, present, and futures. The chapter ends by outlining how a conscious appraisal of the post-socialist performance paradigms might be facilitated by turning modes of performance reconstruction into conscious forms of reinvention.

East Side Stories: reconstructing ideas and narratives

The city of Berlin has probably been the greatest inspiration to its revue makers—directors, dramaturgs, choreographers, performers, designers, musicians, amongst others—who, over more than 100 years, have been trying to find hooks, ideas, and narratives for revue extravaganzas that were and still are supposed to please city dwellers as much as tourists. The city's history and its culture shaped the imaginaries of revue makers and ultimately fashioned their dramaturgical approaches towards conveying specific readings of the city's cultural or political lives. Throughout the genre's history in Berlin, the city has received different treatments on stage: the manifestations vary from songs about the city, to tableaux about the city's metropolitan character, to whole revues that elaborate the various aspects of Berlin's cultural and subcultural phenomena. The imaginary of Berlin has thus functioned as what culture scholar Franz-Peter Kothes describes as 'narrative strand predominantly consisting of leitmotifs' (1977:51)¹. In a revue, Kothes argues, these leitmotifs are primarily expressed visually and impart meaning through the order in which they appear. The German name for revue extravaganza, *Ausstattungsrevue*, gives away the way meaning is predominantly made. Production numbers, quite literally, expose the show's visual 'endowment'. Through décor and extravagance, through sceneries, costumes, special effects, and bodies in motion, the leitmotifs or ideas are represented on stage.

This chapter is about how the city of Berlin and the history of the genre of the revue extravaganza were represented on the stage of the Friedrichstadt-Palast during the time of the German Democratic Republic. It is further about the relation between a revue idea and its realisation as a feature-length production show. I argue in this chapter that revue dramaturgies expose specific ways of thinking that are always a reflection of the surrounding socio-cultural contexts and as such impart values and convictions already through their narrative structure. These histories, however, exist in a continuum of revue history that stretches from Wilhelmine Berlin before the Great War to the contemporary Berlin of today. Before I approach the Palast's institutional history in East Berlin, I will summarise the history of how Berlin was represented in the revue extravaganzas from before the GDR and introduce this chapter's key concepts in

¹ leitmotivischer Handlungsfaden

order to show why it is important to revisit the performance histories of the GDR as a vital part of the Berlin revue.

Historian Peter Jelavich has argued that before the Great War (1914-1918), ‘Berliners were above all concerned with maintaining their metropolitan image’ (1993:112). During these days, Berlin was the centre of Prussian power. The city symbolised notions of modernity that, under the rule of German Emperor Wilhelm II, on the one hand, exposed ‘blatant nationalism’ (ibid:111), but, on the other hand, were indicators of a mighty metropolis, ‘touting its own qualifications as a capital of modernity, a global leader in industry, commerce, and consumerism’ (ibid:169). In this regard, Berlin was thus not only a theme, but an idea, which is to say that it conveyed an understanding of the city as a phenomenon that is based in time-specific socio-cultural views and thus reflects specific cultural practices. Since revue extravaganzas are mostly non-text-based theatrical entertainments that convey their meanings through performances and design, a revue’s idea encapsulated specific cultural texts and modes of aestheticisation. In 1976, the Friedrichstadt-Palast’s dramaturge Wolfgang Tilgner² stated that an idea for a revue is ‘the basic device, the fundamental constant of the programme’ (1976:38) and must be ‘organising and constitutive’ (ibid).³ According to him, the show idea aestheticises discursive contexts and forms them into the ‘constitutive creative vision’ (ibid:42)⁴ with ‘scenic density’ (ibid)⁵. In the Wilhelmine era, for example, revues at the Metropol theatre⁶ ‘had been considered ideal expressions of Berlin’s metropolitan modernity’ (Jelavich, 1993:166), as they celebrated the newest fashions in combination with a regularly updated programme that included the latest news. Berlin as an idea constituted practices and arrayed moments of performance so as to reflect an image of Berlin that ‘replicated the fragmented diversity of urban experience’ (ibid). Culturally, these revues ‘exuded the self-confidence of the imperial capital, the hub of the greatest power on the European continent as well as the world’s second greatest industrial nation’ (ibid:166).

² In a 1976 paper on the artistic development of the Palast, chief dramaturge Wolfgang Tilgner defined many of these revue-specific terms on a dramaturgical basis and as expressions of a Marxist cultural practice. I recovered his manuscript in the Palast’s archive and will return to his deliberations throughout this thesis.

³ ‘Die Idee, der Grundeinfall ist eine elementare Konstante und Konstituente des Programms, der Revue’ ...‘einheitliche Ordnung verschafft’.

⁴ ‘konstituierende schöpferische Fantasie’

⁵ ‘szenischer Dichte’

⁶ The theatre was inaugurated in 1898 and was located at what is nowadays called Komische Oper on Behrenstraße. It primarily showed operettas and revues. The theatre was heavily bombed during the Second World War. In 1955, it moved into the Admiralspalast near Friedrichstraße train station. During the GDR, it showed operettas and musicals.

This changed after the Great War. According to Jelavich, '[t]he disasters of the war and the inflation deprived the city of this distinction' (1993:169). The Weimar revue reflected Germany's condition during the 1920s, which was marked by the great defeat and the economic hard time that followed. Jelavich writes that 'early Weimar revues had no upbeat numbers about contemporary Berlin. Instead, they harked back to the "good old days" before the military and economic traumas' (ibid:166). Berlin as a stage idea became secondary, because it could no longer provide 'positive thematic images of modernity' (ibid). Instead, revues found inspiration abroad: '[i]n the Weimar era the revues demonstrated their cosmopolitan allures not by touting Berlin, but rather by presenting an array of foreign numbers' (ibid:169). Instead, the metropolis was channelled through icons from abroad, like the kicklines of girls or jazz music: 'What Berlin claimed to be before the war, New York seemed to be thereafter: a hectic and mighty metropolis, a global centre of production, finance, commerce, and consumerism' (ibid). Additionally, as Wolfgang Jansen points out, the revues of the 1920s became an increasingly international business that resulted in 'relatively coherent standards in show business' (1987:63). Acts toured the entertainment capitals of the West, including Berlin, Vienna, London, Paris, and New York City. Theatre thus required a format that would allow such acts to be implemented. To retain a vernacular quality, revues in Berlin increasingly became either folkloristic (as Charell's revues; Clarke, 2007:116-118) or resorted to the depiction of specific milieus (as James Klein's revues at Komische Oper; Jelavich, 1987:161-165).

I am interested in this change of the idea of 'Berlin' and its stage reconstructions from before to after the First World War, because a similar modification also happened at the Friedrichstadt-Palast after the Second World War in the German Democratic Republic; with the exception that the second change has not yet been discussed in an academic context. While scholars have examined the early-twentieth-century revues of the Wilhelmine (1901-1914) and Weimar (1918-1933)⁷ era as industry-wide phenomena spanning several institutions, the shift that occurred after 1945 is associated with the Palast only, as it was the only theatre in Berlin that continued to work in the memory of the *Ausstattungsrevue* after the war.⁸ In order to illustrate why a closer look at the history of the Palast revue's 'Berlin' trajectory is significant, I would like

⁷ Jelavich's examination of cabaret and revue in Berlin ends with a discussion of cabaret in the concentration camps in 1944.

⁸ I elaborate on the shift to the socialist revue in chapter 2.1.

to take a big leap into the recent present to make evident a gap in the contemporary conceptualisation of the Berlin revue that can only be explained by revisiting the East German revue histories.

While ‘Berlin’ as an idea and benchmark had lost its appeal in the Weimar revues, Palast productions of the recent past have outspokenly reconstructed notions of ‘Berlin’ that directly relate to the city. The most recent example is *The Wylld* from 2014, which reconstructed an imaginary version of Berlin and revealed, through its distinct aestheticisations of the city’s cultural markers, that there is an untold history of East German aestheticisation that this revue is a version of. *The Wylld* reconstructed Berlin as a city of futurity and possibility; and by doing so was rather upbeat about the city and what it had to offer. It specifically celebrated the city of Berlin as the new home of techno, hedonism, and various urban cultures. Instead of the Weimar-esque Americanisations, the revue again exposed a clear focus on vernacular traditions and histories, using Berlin as a container for a plethora of local references through which revue moments were created. I mention *The Wylld* in relation to the Weimar revue, precisely because, as I have described in the introduction, the Palast continuously underlines its origin in the Weimar revue and thus actively creates a reference to this memory. As a result, other histories are increasingly forgotten. The book by Hosfeld et al. (see page 4) stressed in 1999 how closely related the revues of Weimar supposedly were to those in modern Berlin at the end of the twentieth century. This view continued to be effective. In 2017, on the theatre’s website, the section about its history comprises two sentences about the GDR. The theatre’s origin in the Weimar Republic take the whole screen (Friedrichstadt-Palast, 2016c:[online]). This gives the impression that the contemporary stage reconstructions of Berlin as an idea arise from or are still closely related to this specific Weimar memory, despite the fact that, as I have shown above, Berlin was referenced entirely differently then. I argue in this chapter, that, from a point of view of practice, revues like *The Wylld* exhibit forms of aestheticisation that are not rooted in a Weimar practice, but have, thanks to East German revue practice, acquired vernacular traditions once more.

The revue explored the life that took place underneath the Lady in the Tower's retreat in the TV tower's top sphere.⁹ While she waited for aliens to invade the city underneath her feet, the show's tableaux explored the urban landscape and its subcultural phenomena as having always already been alien, awkward, and out of this world. The show evolves around various cultural facets of Berlin that are performed through the means of revue practices, like mass choreographies, acrobatic acts, and the presentation of stage technology. In the end, the aliens, wearing leotards adorned with Swarovski crystals, land on the stage on their silver LED surfboards.

The Wyld was only the latest reconstruction of 'Berlin' on the stage of the Friedrichstadt-Palast. Since 1990, seven revues have staged abstracted views of Berlin as their idea, or, as Tülgner said, their 'basic device'.¹⁰ This number indicates that the idea of 'Berlin' was consciously reconstructed to fit a specific cultural horizon. In performance studies, Richard Schechner discusses reconstructions as forms of the 'restored nonevent' (1985:54). According to Schechner, a theatrical event is based on subjunctive reconceptualisations of an event. A nonevent 'may have been itself based on something that happened...' (ibid:53), but does not have to be. It 'is made into a concrete, actual present' (ibid) through a materialisation on the theatrical stage and thereby shapes a culture's imaginary. Every reconstruction is thus a recreation of an already conceptualised attitude that is staged as an event in a specific context and to a certain end. In *The Wyld*, Berlin as an idea provides cultural memories and practices, which crystallise in subjunctive non-events. Every time revue makers use Berlin as an idea for a revue, they create a revision, because this reconstruction generates a particular reading that negates former or adds further subjunctives. Reconstructions of nonevents about Berlin have thus been passed on through various political cultures and contrasting ideologies, causing simple tableau ideas to be embellished and diversified. This has formed a canon of Palast-

⁹ Berlin's TV tower is a 368m high spire topped with a metallic sphere that accommodates an observation deck and a restaurant. It is framed by triangular pavilions and staircase constructions on the ground. Both ends of the tower, the stairs at the bottom and the sphere on the top, have found their way onto the stage of the Friedrichstadt-Palast over the past half a century. For example, in *Berliner Luft* ('Berlin Air', 1966), it was represented in its full appearance on a wooden prospectus; in *Premiere: Friedrichstraße 107* (1984), the show opened by exhibiting the stairs as revue stairs inhabited by show girls who started dancing after the curtain opened; in *The Wyld* (2014), the upper half of the tower's top sphere was represented as a movable set piece with the TV tower's full appearance only being shown as an abstract representation in the backdrop's video projection. All of the reconstructions are discussed in this thesis.

¹⁰ *Kiek ma an!* ('Look, you!', 1999), *City Lights* (1992), *Revue Berlin* (2000), *Revuepalast—Die Palastrevue zum Zwanzigsten* ('Revue Palace—The Palace revue in celebration of the twentieth anniversary', 2004), *Glanzlichter* ('Highlights', 2006), and *Rhythmus Berlin* ('Rhythm of Berlin', 2007).

revue vocabulary and allowed for feature-length reflections on that idea. Each reconstruction of an idea can therefore be understood as what performance scholar Julian Thomas referred to as ‘interpretative productivity’ (in Pearson and Thomas, 1994:141). The reconstruction of an idea is therefore a way of re-framing its subject matter; it brings order to the revue’s secondness. This secondness allows me to conceptualise a number of revues as trajectories, that is, as derivatives of similar subjunctives, which are based in the Palast’s practice of storytelling and directorial practice. *The Wyld* is the latest agent of the ‘Berlin’ trajectory.



IMAGE 1.01. *The Wyld*. The urban tribe on a set piece resembling the TV tower’s top sphere. A cyclorama with HD video projection is in the background.

The Wyld’s idea was to reconstruct contemporary subjunctives of Berlin: objects that belong to the cultural fabric of the city were reconstructed in constant scrutiny of the perception of Berlin as a place of multiplicity and otherworldliness. In its show announcement, the Palast emphasised that it would turn the title of the show into a lens through which it would perceive Berlin:

The extraterrestrials are among us. Anyone who drifts through the parallel universes of the Berlin night can sense it. All kinds of life forms are attracted to this city...THE WYLD, this is human nature in all its facets and the wilderness of the metropolis. It is populated with flamboyant mavericks, city slickers and intergalactic metamorphoses – ultra-modern and archaic, bizarre and futuristic. (Friedrichstadt-Palast, 2014a:[online])

The show's plot device was the idea of Berlin as a modern metropolis. *The Wylde's* first production number commenced with a backdrop projection that directed the gaze down the iconic TV tower into the streets of Berlin. Before this tableau was a short scene that introduced the lady who lived in the TV tower's top sphere. The visual narrative was thus passed on from the stage's built environment, that is, a set piece that resembled the shape of the sphere (image 1.01), into a virtual projection of a highly abstracted, futuristic version of Berlin's streets. Set to electronic music beats and a chorus singing 'Into the wild we go,' the urban tribes performed, choreographed by X-Factor UK's creative director Brian Friedman, the urban city life through urban and commercial dance moves. In adapting the electronic music that Berlin has become world-famous for and visually combining it with a Tron-like city-scape of urban Berlin in the backdrop, the first tableau created a reconstruction of Berlin that associated the meta-text of an urban vision with contemporary popular culture and virtual futurism. Image 1.02 shows the futuristic backdrop and the dancers, dressed in over-sized straight-cut sweater couture. The show managed the city's contemporary sights and sounds from the first tableau onwards. The scenes of the first act reconstructed the city's sights as places of performance: punks who inhabit subway tunnels recreated the sound of a steam engine during their tap dance in leather boots; the TV tower's top sphere was inhabited by poodles who showed off their tricks; and in the museum, the tessellated muscle men awoke to life to perform a balancing act. The audience was allowed to surf on the rhythms of Berlin by watching the sights, sounds, and performances come to life. *The Wylde's* mode of reconstruction was a mode of a distinct aestheticisation that was upbeat about Berlin's vernacular cultures.

The scenes of the second act were arranged in thematic blocks. In the Neues Museum, home of the bust of Egyptian queen Nefertiti, the queen comes to life while the backdrop shows an elevator-like transition into the museum's catacombs. The ensuing scene resembled one of the many Berlin techno venues whose homes are abandoned industrial sites of the last century. The 'Egyptian Party'-block was a coherent tableau during which the stage's machinery (submersible stair cases, revolving stages, flying set elements, and lighting) altered the scenery in order to accommodate the presented practices (various mass choreographies, pas-de-deux, kick lines dances, and aerial duos). Although utterly fictitious, the display became settled in the appropriated visions of Berlin and its contemporary culture.

This scene's involvement with urban Berlin culminated in the song 'Ich bin ein Berliner' ('I am a Berliner'). Accompanied by a tune in the style of *Cabaret*'s 'Mein Herr'¹¹, seven revue girls entered the stage consecutively during seven verses, each with her unique chair whose design expressed the girl's stage character. Through these design choices, Berlin became reconstructed on stage as a collage of seven of its districts, each being performed by a Palast girl in localised drag: each girl's verse mirrored her respective vernacular identity with the theatrical means of video content, musical arrangement, and choreography. Touristy places, like the department store of KaDeWe in Wilmersdorf, were mentioned alongside places of musical subcultures, like the techno club of Berghain, and the punk rock attitudes of Kreuzberg. Conceptually, this scene conflates sites of urban Berlin with the multi-layered sensual expressions and repackages them in the style of Berlin cabaret culture, only to reconnect with *The Wylde*'s central narrative by the end of the song: the scene ends with the seventh girl, Nefertiti, whose verse is modulated in Egyptian manners. She ends her verse by lip-syncing the insertion: 'Ich bin ein Berliner,' John F. Kennedy's famous one-liner of 1963 in which he expressed his sympathies to the West Berliners after the Wall of Berlin was erected a few years before.¹² By adding '...forever,' she writes herself into Berlin's cultural text: she may have been an Egyptian queen, but she has been acquired during German colonialism and has, uncritically, been appropriated to become synonymous with Berlin's contemporary museum scene.

In *The Wylde*, Berlin's reconstructions recreated a streamlined version of Berlin's multiplicity that worked through notions of the urban hub as a modern construction of freedom and hedonism by relating these values to the tableaux' fictitious situations. *The Wylde*'s idea was effective, because it was also the method for aestheticizing the referenced cultural markers. Such concepts, writes cultural theorist Mieke Bal, 'can only do this work, the methodological work that disciplinary traditions used to do, on one condition: that they are kept under scrutiny through a confrontation with, not application to, the cultural objects being examined' (Bal, 2002:2). Her notion of separating concepts from cultural objects was reflected in the ways in which the show idea of *The Wylde* handled the city's cultural heritage. In the end, the show's idea and

¹¹ From the musical *Cabaret*, which is set in Berlin just prior to World War II. It depicts the fading away of Weimar cabaret culture in the rise of national socialism in Germany. In the movie version, 'Mein Herr' is performed by Liza Minnelli as Sally Bowles on a cabaret stage, framed by other girls on chairs.

¹² In fact, the song's projected video content on the stage's backdrop resembles a piece of the Berlin Wall which for each stanza becomes repainted according to the girl's character. With Kennedy's one-liner uttered by Nefertiti, this scenic choice becomes explicitly clear.

narrative can be seen as having created a frame that allowed its audience to look at the city's spectacles through another lens. The product was an alternative rendition of a cultural subtext. The conflation of modern music, historic characters (such as Nefertiti and her husband Akhenaton as a high-heeled drag queen, image 1.03), and haute-couture fashion strived to eradicate historical narratives of the city and its chronology. The result was a product of the present and a representation of urbanity's sensations.



IMAGES 1.02-03. *The Wyld: Out of this world*. 1.06 Opening production number 'Urban tribe'; **1.07** Nefertiti's husband Akhenaton reimagined as an Egyptian drag queen in 'Nefertiti's Party'.

Berlin as a matter of the revue extravaganza tends to regularly return to update its underlying abstractions and to add further variants to the repertoire of stage moments. However, 'Berlin' is only one of many families of ideas that have formed during the Palast's East German past and continued to exist thereafter.¹³ The maturation of these ideas is an important, yet already forgotten, part of the institution's history of aestheticisation. In relation to my opening summary of how the idea of 'Berlin' developed between Wilhelmine Berlin and today, I argue that the East German histories of how Berlin was reconstructed in the revue extravaganzas of the Palast are a vital part of the development of the idea in relation to the larger

¹³ This chapter's repertoire mapping could be extended by further narrative trajectories, but would then require individual approaches in order to untangle aesthetic developments and cultural ramifications. Further trajectories could be formed as sartorial-consumerist revues (*Warenhaus der Guten Laune* ('Department store of geniality', 1960); *Kleider machen Leute* ('Clothes make people', 1968), homely-folkloristic revues (*Hochzeit an der Spree* ('Wedding at the river Spree', 1948); *Der Fischzug von Stralau* ('The Haul of Stralau', 1949); *Lüge auf den ersten Blick* ('Lie at first sight', 1957), holiday-travel revues (*Ferienglück am Ostseestrand* ('Holiday happiness at the Baltic Beach', 1952); *Einmal am Rhein* ('Once upon a Rhine', 1956), *Strandkorb No. 13* ('Beach Chair No 13', 1961), musical revues (*Triumph einer Melodie*, ('Triumph of a melody', 1958); *Schlagerparade* ('Schlager parade', 1964), and many more. Some of these shows will be discussed with reference to their particular stage practices in the ensuing chapters.

history of revue performance in Berlin. To illustrate this coherence, this chapter continues to examine two families of show ideas that have resurfaced at different points in time throughout the Friedrichstadt-Palast's history and that have aestheticised the revue towards specific ideological horizons.

The first group of case studies reconstructs notions of 'Berlin' as a centre of socialist world-building during the GDR. Berlin was the place of government and the GDR's primary source of identity, and therefore embodied like no other revue idea the conjuncture of politics, ideology, and culture. The larger historical argument of this chapter is that it was precisely this mix that encouraged revue makers to actively turn towards Berlin as an inspiration for their shows again after 1945. While Weimar revue makers Americanised the genre, revue makers at the Palast increasingly made them vernacular again and rooted them in a specifically East German culture. In comparison to the Weimar revues, *The Wylld* (2014) showed how the Palast's curatorial relationship to conscious reconstructions developed into established strategies of aestheticisation that channel revisions and renewals of performance histories. Whereas *The Wylld* employed the aesthetic principles of the revue in order to find ways of expressing Berlin's character as a hub of urban multiplicity, the impetus for revues in the GDR was to depict Berlin as a product of historical materialism and at the same time counter bourgeois remnants, as I will explain below.

The latter part of this chapter deals with a second group of case studies about the 'revue' itself and focuses on how the theatre's own histories and practices have been represented through show narratives. In this context, revue functions culturally-historically as memory, because it continuously reconstructs its own histories and practices to varying degrees of legibility under respective contemporary influences. The depictions of both Berlin and its revue history have originated in the Weimar revue and have since been processed through various political cultures, contrasting ideologies, and cultural identities. Whether the sights and sounds of Berlin's history or signature tableaux and dances of revue history, the Friedrichstadt-Palast developed and diversified these ideas during its 40-year history under socialism. Each resurfacing of an idea is a version of what came before: it draws together attitudes and moods and is never for the first time. Over time, and the more these ideas have been diversified, the more they have become fleshed out and thus allowed for comprehensive reflections on those ideas. To investigate these relations means to analyse a vision or abstracted condition with regards to recurring dramaturgical patterns, that is, the manner in which these ideas were realised through the very materiality of the means of the stage and over the

duration of an entire Friedrichstadt-Palast's revue. As a result, the reconstructions of similar show ideas have perpetuated the genre across many decades. Although this chapter leaves a considerable number of revues unaccounted for, the methodology allows me to investigate a selection of Friedrichstadt-Palast revues and propose that they are part of a larger practice-related continuum that, despite several political changes since 1945, have generated variations of common ideas by means of performance reconstruction.

1.1. Berlin, ideology, and narrativity

It is forgotten today that during the early years of the German Democratic Republic, 'Berlin' had become meaningful again for the construction of revue tableaux at the Friedrichstadt-Palast. The stagings of Berlin received a socialist treatment that locally grounded the country's new dominant ideology in the cultural fabric of the city and, at the same time, engendered new forms of revue dramaturgies. This section looks at revue ideas and the resulting dramaturgical patterns through the lens of ideology at a time when the revue's reconstructions of Berlin were not about managing the city's multiplicity, but about recoding its cultural history to correspond with the socialist singularity in East Germany. When in the summer of 1945 the Potsdam Conference initiated Germany's division into occupied zones, it also set forth a series of changes in cultural policies that put East Germany, that is, the Soviet occupied zone, on a socialist cultural trajectory.¹⁴ While a new society was engineered, the German Democratic Republic was officially formed as a Marxist-Leninist socialist state in 1949.¹⁵ The Eastern part of Berlin, whose whole had been the former capital of Germany, became the capital of the first German socialist state. The transition to a socialist culture was declared completed in the 1960s, which meant that the socialist conception of history became 'societally potent' (Haase et al, 1986:267-83). In the eyes of the socialists, only a tangible contestation with history 'contributes to a stabilisation of the correct, i.e. socialist, attitudes' (Streisand, 1981:169). Dramaturgical structures of that time thus meant to materialise ideology by turning it into tangible assets of a new imaginary that placed Berlin on a trajectory towards communism. The Palast's methods of aestheticisation can be

¹⁴ Although this was always argued as an achievement of the working class, the creation of the country had long been planned by communist expatriates in Moscow, who have later stood for the country's elites. On the influence of German communist expatriates in Moscow see Groschopp, 2013:14.

¹⁵ For contextualised primary material of this period see Jäger, 1995. For ideological studies of the period from a socialist point of view see Streisand, 1981; Haase et al, 1986.

linked to a specifically East German tradition of a dialectical examination of performance histories and practices that were employed in order to stage alternative versions of a traditional canon. By the 1960s, the Friedrichstadt-Palast had developed narrative structures through which it could reconstruct subjunctive nonevents about socialist and pre-socialist Berlin that would work in favour of the ideology and its cultural practice.

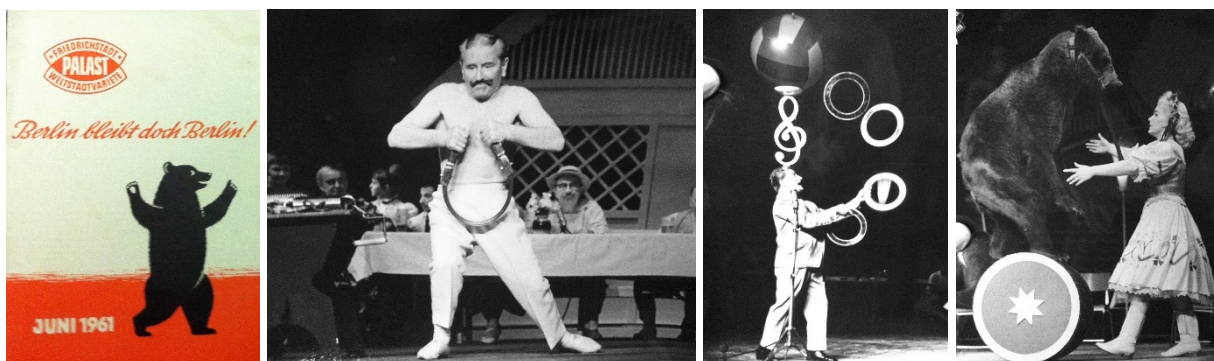
The ensuing two case studies look at how the imaginary of a changing socialist Berlin was reconstructed as a response to changing perceptions of the capital city. Both revues, which claim to be about Berlin, were in fact about the legitimisation of socialism at different points in time and thus responding to different conceptualisations of the socialist horizon. In the early and late 1960s, just before and right after the Berlin Wall was built, Berlin was a medium for political storytelling and trigger for the Palast's extravagant theatrical practices. *Berlin bleibt doch Berlin!* ('Berlin is still Berlin!', 1961), and *Berliner Luft* ('Berlin Air', 1966), exemplify how, on a narrative level, the revue's dramaturgical patterns developed a response to the prevalent ideological thinking and appropriated past narratives to fit their socialist world view. During those times, the revue was a way to stabilise the socialist imaginary of the young country.¹⁶

1.1.1. The same but different: Acquiring the past

Only days after *Berlin bleibt doch Berlin!* ('Berlin is still Berlin!', 1961) finished its run, the East German authorities started erecting the Berlin Wall overnight on 13 August 1961 and thereby stopped movement across the border. The show dealt with the duality of two different halves of Berlin at a time when the two cities still co-existed with a much more permeable border. The revue strung together various scenarios of a contemporary East Berlin of 1961: faithful to ideological praxis, the revue portrayed Berlin, the Great City, not as a cosmopolitan hub, but instead as a city rooted in rediscovered folk traditions. At the same moment, the reconstruction of socialist Berlin exhibited a surprising amount of international openmindedness.

¹⁶ In literature, this period (roughly 1949-61) has become known as *Aufbauliteratur*, literature that was meant to depict and develop figuratively the image of the new human being as she actively shapes the new socialist society. For *Aufbauliteratur* see Emmerich, 2000:113-73. For a socialist examination of this period see Streisand, 1981:82-95. In theatrical and mundane dance, this period is marked by finding a new East German identity in folk, see Giersdorf, 2013:26-48.

Although the title of the revue placed the GDR revue in a line with its Weimar predecessors, it also encapsulates some basic particularities of socialist entertainment culture that characterise many of the Palast extravaganzas of the 1960s. The title commemorates a line from Herrmann Haller's famous Metropol-revue *Drunter und Drüber* ('Topsy Turvy', 1923), in which composer Walter Kollo's 'Linden-March' evoked a nostalgia for a cosmopolitan version of Berlin from before the First World War. The line 'Berlin, du bleibst Berlin (Berlin, you're still Berlin)' (in Jelavich, 1993:167) premiered at the height of inflation and expresses the longing for a Berlin that was economically stable and culturally the powerhouse of Europe. In 1961, the title *Berlin bleibt doch Berlin!* implied that some unnamed but unavoidable circumstances had had an impact on the city. Those circumstances were the ideological manifestations of Marxist cultural acquisition and appropriation and the ensuing re-engineering of a vernacular imagery that were the outcome of the military defeat and occupation after 1945. The title of the revue tries to convince audiences that these changes were acceptable: if one looked at the cultural reconfigurations of a common imaginary through the correct, that is, a socialist lens, they appeared as the only way forward. That is why Berlin was always going to remain Berlin, even despite all the changes that were going on in the eastern part of the city. The revue conveyed to the audience that the appropriation of traditions and heritage did not have a negative connotation but was instead regarded as a necessary practice in order to overcome capitalistic forms of exploitation. Since art had the function to educate people, the 'progressive thinking' that was mediated through the revue was meant to induce a meaningful reception of history and vernacular traditions. The reconstructions of Berlin in this revue were therefore attempts to re-imagine vernacular cultural markers in order to provide reassurance about the processes of socialist world-building.



IMAGES 1.04-07. *Berlin bleibt doch Berlin!* (1961). 1.04 Front cover of the programme booklet; 1.05 Gartenkolonie; 1.06 Rolly Brandt at Gartenrestaurant Zenner; 1.07 Rudi Althoff's Wodern Bears at Kuckucksheim.

Accompanied by ‘true Berlin tunes’ (Friedrichstadt-Palast, 1961:12)¹⁷, the revue started with an opening production number comprising ‘20 dashing girls’ (ibid)¹⁸ set on East Berlin’s famous strolling promenade Unter den Linden, together with the Brandenburg Gate as set piece: ‘You see it and instantly know: Berlin is in the picture’ (ibid)¹⁹. Adi and Annemarie, the two protagonists, interact with the girls and then take the audience through various scenes of Berlin city life.

The revue’s tableaux were entirely based on nonevents, incidents that never happened, but that were based on vernacular cultural traditions. Bal suggests that ‘traditions are inventions, fictions of continuity necessary for a conception of history as development or progress’ (2002:218). In a socialist reading, traditions were part of the cultural heritage that was meant to be acquired and used to structure the socialist project. In consciously dealing with capitalist cultural expressions in Marxist-Leninist terms, the GDR implemented processes of cultural acquisition that involved the re-branding of cultural expressions, citations, metaphors, and practices.²⁰ In this respect, the city of Berlin embodied Lenin’s concept of how two cultures always co-existed in modern bourgeois societies; ‘a ruling (bourgeois, often arrantly reactionary) culture and “elements of a democratic and socialist culture”’ (Lenin quoted in Haase et.al: 1986:19).²¹ The latter bring forth the socialist ideology and the concurrent need to acquire and appropriate existing cultures. In this struggle, the GDR saw itself as being

socially, temporally, and territorially the result of the whole of German history as it is understood from the formation of the German people as an ethnic entity until the year 1945. The socialist German nation is the legitimate continuation of this long history and at the same time the outcome of many hundreds of years of war between progress and reaction. (Haase et al, 1986:493)

As indicated by the revue’s programme booklet and the break-down of the tableaux therein, the Palast reconstructed Berlin by silencing the bourgeois part: the revue’s narrative only considered sights of East Berlin and reconstructed one half of Berlin as representing the whole. Ideologically, this separation

¹⁷ ‘echt Berliner Töne’

¹⁸ ‘20 flotte Tänzerinnen’

¹⁹ ‘Man sieht’s und man weiß: Berlin ist im Bilde!’

²⁰ For a detailed party view of how this was achieved ideologically and practically see Haase et al, 1986:29-262. For an evidenced chronology see Jäger, 1995:5-37.

²¹ For a Marxist understanding of culture see Streisand, 1981:45-7; Haase et al., 1986:8-14. For Lenin’s conception of cultural revolution see Streisand, 1981:50-8, Haase et al., 1986:18-20.

happened in two distinct ways; temporally, any form of Berlin's cultural heritage from the past could potentially be appropriated in just the right way so as to work out its inherent socialist traits; and geographically, the divided city now contained both these traits: a progressive, socialist culture in the East, and a regressive, bourgeois culture in the West. A reviewer from *Neues Deutschland* acknowledged this approach as worthwhile, because the stylised set and costume designs were perceived as providing crucial 'background descriptions' (W.H., 1961:8)²², without further explicating what these would tell him exactly. Nevertheless, the conviction that East German culture was superior remained the basic structure for the ideological class struggle between East and West Germany until the end of the GDR, only its aesthetic manifestations changed, as I will explore in the upcoming chapters.

In the Palast, cultural acquisition was tightly controlled through the Socialist Unity Party's numerous party organs and committees. As in any business in the GDR, the party's interests were ensured through a *Grundorganisation* ('grass-root-organisation'), whose elected leaders, the *Parteileitung*, oversaw both the theatre's strategic and operational activities.²³ Additionally, the Palast's office of dramaturgy was created in the first half of the year 1959.²⁴ Its purpose was to steer acquisition and appropriation processes in the creation of new revues. In an article in the professional magazine *Artistik*, Alfred Dreifuß, author and functionary in the GDR's theatre scene, criticised the simple framing ideas and 'bitty framework plots' (1959:5²⁵) in Palast revues of the early 1950s, arguing that they could not be considered successful enough to appropriate the viewing behaviours that the bourgeois revue imparted: 'we need new dramaturgical postulates' (ibid)²⁶. A dramaturg of the revue and variety theatre had to 'research and harness various forms of the genre, like that of the erstwhile "Trocadero" and "Folies Bergère"...and other great European

²² 'milieuschildernde Szenen'

²³ For the Party's regulatory framework of theatres see Bradley, 2010:15-21.

²⁴ According to Dreifuß, the dramaturg's bureau was a response to the *Kulturkonferenz* ('conference on culture') from October 1957, the fifth party congress from July 1958, and the fourth plenary meeting of the *Plenum des Politbüros der SED* ('politburo'), which all aimed at finding ways to centralise the planning of the country's cultural development. While the grassroot organisation's documents can still be found in the archive, further information as to how it was organised and who was part in it is severely missing.

²⁵ 'zusammengeschusterte Rahmenhandlung'

²⁶ 'wir müssen dramaturgische Postulate schaffen'

institutions, [like] the English show business or the Russian Estrade' (ibid).²⁷ Throughout the GDR's history, the debates about what heritage was appropriate enough to acquire never ceased.²⁸ In the case of *Berlin bleibt doch Berlin!*, the focus remained vernacular. The methods of cultural acquisition and appropriation required revue makers to scour old substance for relevant links that catered for new contents. In this way, heritage appropriation was officially seen as an act of creation. This agenda was actively set by the dramaturg, but often contested by other artists, like choreographers, as I will discuss in the second chapter.

Typically for the revues of the 1950s and 1960s, the opening production-number set the scene for the remaining show and was, together with the finale, visually the most elaborate tableau. Dramaturg Wolfgang Tilgner emphasises that although the integration of the idea into the fabric of the revue starts with the exposition, it must not end there: the translation of an idea into a meaningful specificity required this opening scene to set up a number of incidences for the idea to develop further throughout the show. According to Tilgner, preparing an idea for its staging means to configure tableaux in such a way that they are 'sensually concrete' (Tilgner, 1976:43)²⁹, which means that the dramaturgical structure of the remaining revue aims at aesthetically managing these signals through consciously conveying a clear image of ideology. In the case of *Berlin bleibt doch Berlin!*, the opening clearly situated the revue in a contemporary imagination of a specifically Eastern version of Berlin in 1961. As can be reconstructed from the programme brochure and the photographs, Berlin was reconstructed to express socialist singularity in a folkloristic manner: a visit to the garden colony Kuckucksheim at Plänterwald, dancing the Rixdorfer, live bears (the city's mascot, image 1.07) and a visit to the garden restaurant Zenner (image 1.06); they all express a kind of Berlin that was antagonistic to the perceived cosmopolitan, western imagination of the city. Historically, however, the relation between Berlin and the nature surrounding it was in fact a matter of bourgeois recreation. Jelavich writes that before the Great War, such 'allotment gardens on the edge of the city' (1993:104) were an indicator of a metropolitan reading of nature: 'one rode the crowded suburban train and reached the fields

²⁷ 'Zu erforschen und für uns nutzbar zu machen sind die verschiedensten Formen des klassischen Varietés, so des einstigen Pariser "Trocadero" und der "Folies Bergère" ... und anderer großer Europäischer Häuser [wie] dem angelsächsischen Showbusiness, aus den Estraden-Programmen des UdSSR und der Volksdemokratien'. Estrade is a form of the folklore revue that was popular in the East-bloc countries, primarily in Russia. It combines musical and circus elements. The musical elements were similar to the German Schlager, a version of popular version of vernacular folk music.

²⁸ For a history of cultural acquisition in literature see Emmerich, 2000:84/283-346 and Zimmering, 2000.

²⁹ 'sinnliche Konkretheit'

and forests' (ibid). In the GDR revues, the garden colonies with their allotment gardens and accompanying cultural institutions, like cafés and amusements for the working citizens, were now, several decades later, framed as a part of a folkloristic reading of Berlin as the great city, in which nature and folklore had become both recreation for the working class and foundation of a specifically East German national identity. The revue thus appropriated a local cultural imaginary towards a reimagination of a folkloristic selection of the city's popular culture.

According to East German cultural scientist Joachim Streisand, cultural heritage was considered as successfully appropriated if the way in which it appeared to the senses had changed (1981:183-87). In this context, folk was a technique to appropriate existing cultural markers and as a national vocabulary in the socialist world building it stabilised the Palast's re-imaginings of Berlin as being part of a larger cultural project. Folk was constructed as a cultural entity from a time before capitalism and class struggle induced the human's alienation. It was meant to serve the promotion, fostering, and fortification of the traditions that were in the working class's interest. The East German socialists saw themselves connected to capitalism in an onward cultural continuum only, which meant that they retroacted with capitalist cultural remnants, but did no longer want to be shaped by it. Therefore, their stage reconstructions of Berlin were re-imaginings of the contemporary as folksy, which in the socialist consciousness was seen as progressive in spite of everything.

In a wider historical context, however, folk in Germany also has a distinct nationalistic quality that arose during the aftermath of the French Revolution and was further exploited in Germany's nationalising movement at the end of the nineteenth century and in the first half of the twentieth century under the fascist regime.³⁰ Writing on East German culture, literary scholar Stephan Ehrig observed that in the GDR, "none of this *völkisch* mindset appeared problematic or even worth criticising in the self-declared anti-fascist state" (emphasis in original, 2018:3). This was because, as Dance scholar Jens Richard Giersdorf further elucidates, folk in the GDR should not be confused with dance and physical culture as it was streamlined by the Nazis, but rather be seen in relation to the Soviet Union's use of folk as its 'most important cultural expression' (2013:29). Folk was seen as having the potential to act as 'a vehicle for manufacturing community

³⁰ See Karina and Kant, 2003:85-96 for the use of folk dance as one means toward what was perceived as a truly German dance.

identification' (ibid:27), because it used local myths to construct tales of origin for specific values and beliefs.³¹ In the early years of the GDR, folk was thus the prism through which the East German part of Berlin was reconstructed on stage, seemingly as a direct and unspoiled connection to a distant German past.

As indicated on the cover of the programme booklet (image 1.04), the bear, the city's mascot, became performed embedded in folkloristic settings, like the garden colony (image 1.05). Performing a specially aestheticised version of the Berlin folk dance Rixdorfer, for example, was another materialisation of this thinking. The Rixdorfer is a Berlin dance tune and folksong that is based on a Bohemian polka and originated in the German Empire around Dönhoffplatz, which is today Leipziger Straße (East Berlin). I will return to the importance of folk aesthetics in the second chapter. In this chapter, it is important to remember that folk was used as a distinct artistic language through which imaginaries were appropriated in order to make them appear socialist and to stop them from reinserting bourgeois values in a socialist society.³² Folk, as the principle artistic method of this revue provided assurance that despite the socialist reinvention of German-ness, Berlin is still Berlin.

The revue's second act was an example of how a Palast show always manipulated audiences' memories of past and present. After having reconstructed Berlin as a haven of folksy traditions with the help of both dance practice and production design in the first act, the second half embedded western musical acts in traditional folk aesthetics in order to counter the cosmopolitan aesthetics of Western societies.³³ This view, however, is only valid if the ideological aspects of the revue are considered. Most shows during the 1960s and 1970s were in fact of arbitrary content in their second acts; at first sight, *Berlin bleibt doch Berlin!* was one of those examples in which the first act started off promisingly and then resorted to the rendition of song recitals in the second act. The revue's alignment with the ideological thinking of its time, however, suggests that this particular two-act-structure could have had the practical purpose of acquiring material for

³¹ I will examine the embodied implications of folk in greater detail in the next chapter.

³² Streisand discussed this apprehension in terms of language (1981:109-42). For example, he advocated the use of precise phrasing to build a rational relationship to history and society. According to him, only clear terminology resisted imperialistic speech patterns and revealed capitalist exploitation. Unclear language disclosed a person's subordination to capitalist structures. If a person who partook in a discussion used the word '*irgendwie* ('like')' in an extensive manner, as Streisand suggests, he was most probably from the Federal Republic (West Germany) (ibid:114). Language was thus seen a carrier of sets of values and intrinsic capitalist convictions that needed to be overcome by means of conscious acquisition and ideological penetration.

³³ For views on the socialist fight against notions of the cosmopolitan see Haase et al., 1986:196-7. For folk as effect aesthetics see Jäger, 1995:47-49.

socialist use through techniques of framing. East Berlin was reinstated as being open to certain Western influences and featured a recital of Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* and a guest appearance by Austrian crooner Willy Hagara. After all, the border to West Berlin was still permeable and access to Western cultural products steady. This revue showed how the then still possible prospect of a peaceful coexistence of East and West Berlin produced a cultural mix that was based on the acquisition of Western cultural products and their appropriation for socialist aesthetics.

1.1.2. Prospective dramaturgies and a concrete future

Six years, 35 revue productions and one Wall later, the Palast reconstructed Berlin as a place of socialist utopia as a reminder of the reasons why a harsh ideological fight against capitalist traces had to be fought. *Berliner Luft* ('Berlin Air', 1966) imparted this stance through a historicisation of Berlin's troubled past.³⁴ Berlin was reconstructed as an expression of the belief that socialist culture was part of the fight over political power to install socialism by skimming off remnants of capitalist cultural expressions and, at the same time, it was also 'the outcome of this fight' (Streisand, 1981:15). The title of the show alluded to Paul Lincke's eponymous march that most notably was also incorporated in his 1899 operetta *Frau Luna* and which is considered to be the unofficial hymn of the city (Richter, 2004:102). The socialist appropriation of this title in 1966 suggests that the view of Berlin as the capital of amusement was meant to be challenged by a socialist retelling of the city's history. The most characteristic aspect of this revue was the dramaturgical pattern that the socialist historicisation engendered: while the revue's tableaux took the audience further and further into the past, the revue ended with a scene that was set several years into the future, because

³⁴ Emmerich argues that the physical division from West Germany unavoidably caused the focus of narratives to shift to 'own, localised, very tangible circumstances of life and conditions. (...) imaging other places became pointless, everyone was forced to grapple with everyday problems and contradictions in situ, or at least to come to terms with the GDR and arrive' (2000:176). The ensuing literature has since been known as *Ankunftsliteratur* (arrival literature), see Beutin et al, 1993:506. This view cannot be directly projected onto the Palast's repertoire. The erection of the Wall brought, however, a rejection of western influences, but the repertoire remained open to international influences from other socialist countries. Revues of the period after the erection of the Berlin Wall dominantly dealt with domestic travel and leisure activities (e.g. *Strandkorb No. 13* ('Beach Chair No. 13', 1961); *Der Palast geht baden* ('The Palast goes bathing', 1963); *hitzig, witzig, spritzig* ('fervid, witty, zappy', 1963) and celebrations of revue itself (*Die große Schau* ('The great show', 1963); *Sterne am Variété* ('Stars of variety', 1963)).

that future emanated as the only possible outcome of the folkloristic re-imagination of ancient Berlin. Berlin became the scene of the socialist historicisation that aimed at reconstructing the Berlin air, i.e. the historical socio-cultural context that was necessary to understand in order to imagine the ‘correct’ socialist future.³⁵ The show commenced at Alexanderplatz in contemporary 1966 East Berlin. It then took its audiences further and further into the past: a scene set at the post-war black market of 1946 was followed by a visit to a garden colony and a night club in 1926, a housing block’s inner courtyard of 1916, and finally a scene set at Under den Linden and a café on Berlin’s outskirts in 1906 (image 1.09).



IMAGES 1.08-09. *Berliner Luft* (1966). 1.08: Front cover of the programme booklet. **1.09:** Café Seeblick on the outskirts of Berlin in 1906.

The historicisation justified why the Wall was erected: the reconstructions of subjunctive nonevents that related to Berlin’s past evoked a clear ideological disconnection with the modern socialist eastern side of Berlin. In seemingly naive tableaux, socialism positioned itself as the only possible alternative to the allegedly destructive capitalism. In reviewing history, the Palast created what Jonathan Arac describes as a ‘critical genealogy’ that ‘aims to excavate the past that is necessary to account for how we got here and the past that is useful for conceiving alternatives to our present condition’ (in Roach, 1996:25). In *Berliner Luft*, the Palast aesthetically appropriates the past in order to promote a desired present. Performance scholar Joseph Roach describes how popular performance aesthetics in North America were socially formed

³⁵ For popular modern narrative techniques of the 1960s (including flashbacks, the use of different chronological periods, stream-of-consciousness, shifts in narrative perspective) see Beutin et al., 1993:522.

through processes of selection and appropriation. If a similar thinking is applied to the Friedrichstadt-Palast revue of the 1960s, the historico-cultural fantasies the socialists reconstructed through their ideology had real ‘effects on human action (and) may have material consequences of the most tangible sort’ (Roach, 1996:27). Read in Roach’s terms, *Berliner Luft* provided ‘the space where imagination and memory converge’ (ibid). The revue’s idea was about the reconstruction of Berlin as an ideological battlefield; its victor, that is, the socialists and their new society, emanate as a foregone conclusion. This view on history ‘from above’ was indicated on the programme booklet (image 1.08), which showed a hot-air balloon that carried the Palast musicians and artists, who interpreted this view for the audience through their stage practices. In this regard, socialism always already theorised its own present by relating it to history. At this moment in time, ideology also became the method for the reconstructions of Berlin on stage, but only in as far as the naive stagings were actually readable.³⁶

The programme booklet helped to reach the historicisation’s teleological conclusion. The first page cites a poem called *Die gute alte Zeit*, (‘The Good Old Times’): ‘At what time exactly had these “good times” been “new”, not “old”, nobody really knows’ (Friedrichstadt-Palast, 1966:1)³⁷. The poem attributes the invention of the concept to *Gedankengreise*, ‘the senile thinkers of old’ (ibid). Therefore, ‘the “good old times” have to put up with being asked, for whom exactly have they been good?’ (ibid)³⁸. The dramaturgical structure of a journey through time taught the audience how to look at history in the same manner as the poem did. The programme booklet further suggested how the tableaux were meant to be read by providing short descriptions: a page on the year 1916, during World War I, ridiculed the contrast of Berlin city life: opulent revues on the one hand and casualty lists on the other. Those who had not lost all their money after the inflation were most likely to have spent it on Berlin’s sites of entertainment in 1926. And the black-markets of 1946 were caused by the food scarcity after the war. These texts clearly depicted the past as a time of failures that were ascribed to the capitalist-imperialist rule of Germany. Only if the German past was understood as depressing and not worthwhile, could the illusions of an advancing socialist society be

³⁶ I assume that great parts of the staging and the staging’s concomitant dramaturgical, i.e. ideological, efficacy was in fact readable to the general audience. By the mid-1960s, the Socialist ideology had penetrated society for almost twenty years. In this context, I understand the programme booklet as primarily confirming, rather than educating.

³⁷ ‘Wann sie eigentlich einmal nicht “alt”, sondern “neu” gewesen ist, weiß keiner so recht.’

³⁸ ‘Und so muß es sich die “gute alter Zeit” gefallen lassen, darauf befragt zu werden, für wen sie gut war.’

manifested as the only possible trajectory. The last pages of the programme booklet showed newly erected housing blocks, the *Plattenbau*. This meant that the reconstruction of Berlin after the capitalist crisis was understood as one of socialism's greatest achievements.

On the stage, the Palast constructed a glimpse into the near socialist future for the revue's finale: it was staged in front of an abstract rendering of Alexanderplatz, including the TV tower, whose construction had in fact not even been finished at the time. The finale of *Berliner Luft* was the result of the revue's historicisation: it was a present soon-to-be that was expressed through celebratory revue dances (image 1.10). This scene can be triangulated with the narrative constants of the East German idea of socialist realism and Wolfgang Tilger's idea of revue dramaturgy (1976:49-50): socialist art was to channel a specific world view by means of anticipation, by using familiar cultural aspects. According to Erwin Pracht, professor of Marxist-Leninist aesthetics at Humboldt University of Berlin, 'wielding the artistic method of socialist realism means to elevate the future to a creative potentiality of the present' (in Jäger, 1995:46). Writing about socialist literature, Manfred Jäger refers to such narrative structures as having '*Perspektivebewusstsein* ('prospective consciousness')' (1995:46). To adopt such a stance meant to express partisanship, because it reflected the idea that the socialist society was on a track towards becoming a communist one. Dramaturge Wolfgang Tilgner referenced the same concept when he discussed how socialist ideology's futurity bears on a revue's ordering: 'Revue's reality is moulded content' (Tilgner, 1976:49)³⁹ and ideology was the most important determinant. On a narrative level, this is when the ideology engendered a narrative concept that already existed in the socialist world-view.⁴⁰ However, a reviewer writing for *Neue Zeit* remarked that the revue's 'informational content, albeit critical and historical, carries the action on stage only imperfectly.'⁴¹ (Bert, 1966:8). The efficacy of prospective consciousness thus still relied on how much the tale of socialist advancement was worth to be told on the revue stage.

³⁹ 'die Realität der Revue als geformten Inhalt'

⁴⁰ The ephemeral moment of the finale imposed itself as a precursor to reality. Joachim Streisand examined this method of socialist art making and found justification in early humanity. According to his perspective, the cave men's paintings did not archive something that happened, but expressed a desirable future, that is, a successful hunting in prospect (1981:173).

⁴¹ 'doch trägt der informatorische Gehalt der Fabel – obgleich kritisch und historisch, (...) nur unvollkommen das Bühnengeschehen. (...) So bleibt der große Berliner Bilderbogen (...) nur schwach in seiner Wirkung.'



IMAGES 1.10-11. *Berliner Luft*. 1.10. Finale tableau: 'Alexanderplatz 1966'. **1.11.** Finale tableau with the TV tower in the background.

Socialist progress was primarily narrated through both cheerful folklore and technological advancement. Image 1.11 shows the abstracted TV tower in the background, amidst new concrete buildings. The TV tower was also a symbol of sovereignty in order to preserve domestic power over the newest media, television. The construction had been enforced by Walter Ulbricht, then head of state, and caused the ground-breaking ceremony to be performed without a building permission from the respective ministries (Kroh et al., 2009:75). What started as an illegal construction that was enforced as a party project was reframed and celebrated in *Berliner Luft* as the tangible socialist future of sovereignty and technological advancement: when it was opened, the TV tower enabled colour TV and was the third highest freestanding structure in the world, after Moscow's TV tower Ostankino and New York's Empire State Building.⁴² The top sphere and its Sputnik-inspired iconography linked the tower to Soviet culture and became a cipher for modernity and much later for urbanism. Fifty years later in *The Wylld*, Berlin's urban world became established by incorporating the top sphere in the scenery first, before other performance markers joined in to support the reading.

⁴² When in 1951 in Stockholm the European frequencies for TV broadcast were distributed (Müller, 2000:19), the GDR had still not been an internationally recognized state. This step of legitimisation was not performed until 1973. Two overlapping, hence glitchy frequencies were allocated to the GDR. In order for the East to cover its urban area with local East German broadcast by the use of directional radio an additional high transmitter became indispensable (ibid:27). For the TV tower's technological advancements, see Eckart, 1997:34.

In the end, *Berlin bleibt doch Berlin!* and *Berliner Luft*, although only five years apart, were constraining products of their respective times, and both exhibited their own characteristic methods of reconstructing Berlin as a medium of ideology. It makes even more evident the pace at which cultural policies and with them their aesthetic manifestations changed during these times. Typically for socialist entertainment, the revues tried to make sense *for* their audiences, not sense *of* the actual perversion of what had officially been perceived as the natural development of an outspokenly engineered society.

In the search for a new socialist utopia for the GDR, theatre makers employed Marxist concepts of cultural acquisition and appropriation to conceive and reconstruct subjunctive nonevents as a means to give materiality to alternatives and new socio-cultural ideals. The 'Berlin' case studies have been particularly useful to show how socialist ideology structured a cultural imaginary, which eventually resulted in specific narrative and dramaturgical arrangements. In socialism, the ideology's potentiality was performed through a prospective consciousness, which, as a cultural expression, organised socialist realist reconstructions of Berlin. So far, this chapter has described the Friedrichstadt-Palast revue's continual re-narration and dramaturgical consequences by seeing the narrative patterns through the prism of futurity and potentiality. The revues, however, were never only geared towards the future, but sourced the means for the future's construction in a teleological interpretation of the past. Dramaturgies express the most evident materialisations of socialist thought. The continual application of these dramaturgical structures also shaped other performances of the Palast's socialist revue extravaganza. The final section of this chapter outlines how this thinking was appropriated for another set of narrative themes. The second chapter projects this form of futurity onto the techniques of the moving bodies of the Friedrichstadt-Palast, and the third chapter extends it into areas of stage technology and the mise-en-scène of socialist tropes.

1.2. Curating memories of practice: Reconstructing the history of the revue

This chapter continues by investigating subjunctive nonevents that relate to practices and histories of the revue as a theatrical genre. Shows in the 'revue' family reconstructed the remembered episodes of the genre's history and thereby continued the retrospective dramaturgical models that I have outlined in the previous section. Revues of this family of ideas have empowered the Palast to acquire the performance histories from

various vernaculars. As opposed to the North American backstage musical,⁴³ which ‘works primarily from the inside, originating from the venue where the show is made and centring on the relationships between the performers who make it’ (Rubin, 1993:34), the East German productions on the revue trajectory increasingly emphasised the aestheticised versions of embodied forms and thus emancipated themselves from venue-specific relations. In *Kinder, wie die Zeit vergeht* (‘Oh boy, how time flies’, 1956), the Palast started this trend and historicised its cultural field in Berlin. This resulted in a curatorial relationship with the revue’s histories, forms, and objects, which the Palast acquired and appropriated. The historicisation was performed in the well-practised pattern of a journey: in an episodic fashion, the different eras of history were reconstructed before the audience’s eyes and made a socialist reading of revue history palpable. In this context, ‘socialist’ means that the revue narrated the milieus of the scenes and reconstructed history as a journey towards the allegedly better times of state socialism. Revue history was therefore rather a means to further legitimise socialism as opposed to acquiring actual practices. This notion will be further complicated in the next chapter, when the moving body enters the discussion of making revue practice socialist. Here, it is important to remember that the ‘revue’ trajectory worked in tandem with the ‘Berlin’ trajectory: the stories that the ‘Berlin’ trajectory wrote out, these shows wrote back into the canon of vernacular histories in order to keep that memory alive, but also to appropriate its genealogies.

From a dramaturgical point of view, the historicisation of revue history was facilitated according to the form of revue: histories, that is, subjunctive non-events reconstructing a specific time and place, were parcelled out and arranged in tableaux. As a result, practices that related to the milieus were more and more isolated. Over the course of two decades, this led to practices and stories being implemented into a revue as exchangeable modules. The place where these ideas were penned as the revue’s ‘text’ was the dramaturg’s office; and the way in which show ideas for the increasingly abstract show in the 1970s were implemented into the Palast’s existing cultural imaginaries evidences a distinctly dramaturgical approach: the Palast curated its practice and was stretched to its own limits in what was regarded aesthetically acceptable. In 1972, *R wie Revue* (‘R as in revue’) celebrated the reconstruction of revue practices as detached parcels. It was not a historicisation, but a modular stringing together of revue practices that included formation dances,

⁴³ The backstage musical has been a famous pattern of narration since the late 1920s in the North American musical. Famous examples are *The Jazz Singer* (1927), and *On With the Show* (1929, the first version of *42nd Street*).

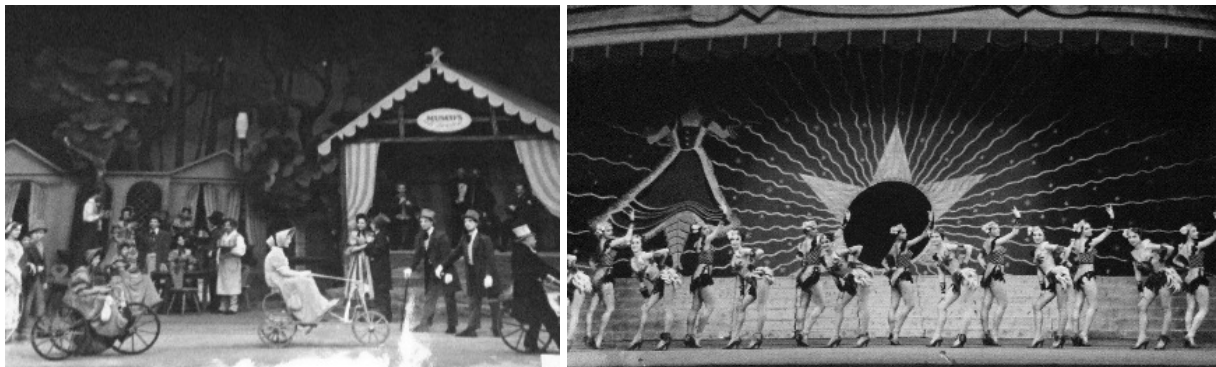
dancers accompanied by singers, apotheoses, and other forms, all of which I will further discuss in chapter 2. As if the revue was taking stock, the presentation of practices was detached from the practices' origins and histories. The analysis of the 'revue' trajectory also makes evident how Marxist cultural practices were used in order to acquire the subjunctives of the bourgeois art form and appropriate its historical and institutional contexts. Seen from a dramaturgical point of view, the Palast had thereby put the revue's practices at its disposal to construct show ideas and narratives.

1.2.1. Practice is never for the first time

1956 was the thirtieth anniversary of Erik Charell's last revue at the Großes Schauspielhaus, *Von Mund zu Mund*, and the premiere of *Kinder, wie die Zeit vergeht*, a revue in which the Palast historicised its own genre. Although Charell is accepted as one of the founding fathers of the institution in today's historicisation of the Palast, he found no mention when in 1956 the Palast took stock of the past 100 years of Berlin's entertainment history and employed Marxist cultural practices to acquire and appropriate these histories for its stage. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile to start considering this new trajectory of the Palast's cultural practice by pointing out what it excluded, because the Palast's ambitions for this revue encompassed not its own histories, but the history of the whole of Berlin's vernacular revue and variety history. According to the programme booklet, this acquisition was meant literally: in post-war East Germany, the Friedrichstadt-Palast saw itself as the last remaining cultural institution producing revue extravaganzas and therefore assumed ownership of a selection of cultural histories.

Although the revue lacked a coherent character-based narrative, the revue reimaged in eight tableaux Berlin's variety and revue history as subjunctive non-events in their chronological order. The revue's narrative structure implied the Marxist conception of history's gradual development towards socialism and used its subjunctive past to project into the near future. The show started with an opening production number set in a homely folkloristic depiction of a variety garden café called the Musco's Café-Garden in what is now the borough of Charlottenburg, which was set in the year 1860. The ensemble ballet number (image 1.12) set the premise of a journey through time. The next tableau visited the Apollo-

Theatre⁴⁴ around the year 1900 on whose stage a Barrison Sisters act was re-enacted. In the programme, presumably for copyright reasons, their name was changed to ‘5 Barrysons’ by yet keeping their original names: Lona, Olga, Sophie, Inger, and Miss Gertrude. The five sisters, who as a risqué vaudeville act toured Europe and North America during the turn of the century, were enacted by five ladies from the Palast’s ballet ensemble. A drop scene at Berlin’s famous esplanade Unter den Linden was followed by a kickline dance at the Wintergarten theatre called ‘Ausgerechnet Bananen (‘Bananas of all things’)’ (image 1.13). In this appropriation of Berlin’s performance history, Josephine Baker’s famous ‘Danse Sauvage,’ in which she wore a skirt composed of just bananas, inspired, at least costume-wise, a girl dance at the Wintergarten theatre tableau.⁴⁵ This performance transformed into a Charleston that closed the first act. The second half started with a production number that was staged in the backstage area of the Scala of the 1930s and then arrived at the contemporaneous Friedrichstadt-Palast.⁴⁶ A jump from the early 1930s to the 1950s’ after-war-period put the Friedrichstadt-Palast in line with its former companions. The present time was described in the programme as a presentation of the ‘humour and acrobatics of today’ (Friedrichstadt-Palast, 1956:n.p.)⁴⁷.



IMAGES 1.12-13. *Kinder, wie die Zeit vergeht* (1956). 1.12 Musco’s Café Garden; **1.13** Wintergarten: ‘Ausgerechnet Bananen (‘Bananas of all things’)’.

The ensuing finale was the climactic moment of release, decadence, and wonder, and was called ‘Der ewige Walzer (‘The Eternal Waltz’)’. The tableau featured a visually spectacular tableau of show girls

⁴⁴ Destroyed in the Second World War, the Apollo-Theatre was one of the highly esteemed variety theatres of Berlin. Paul Linke’s famous operetta *Frau Luna* premiered here in 1899. Revue director James Klein became the Apollo’s theatre manager at the end of the Great War and experimented with revue and extravaganza. For James Klein’s Apollo productions see Jansen, 1987:42-44.

⁴⁵ For Baker’s banana skirt performances see Sowinska, 2006.

⁴⁶ The Scala, another famous Berlin variety theatre, opened in 1920 and had been one of the largest variety stages of Berlin. In the 1920s, it had its own SCALA girls, who were referenced in the programme of the Palast revue.

⁴⁷ ‘Humor und Artistik von heute’

who were distributed on an elaborate staircase structure (image 1.14). Towards the end of this tableau, the hit song ‘Kinder, wie die Zeit vergeht’ by the popular singer-songwriter Heinz Quermann was performed. One line in particular describes the Palast’s stance towards curating the reconstruction of practice:

So wie in alten Zeiten / tanzte der Opapa /
tanzen wir heute selber / alles war schon ’mal da.

(We are dancing today just like gramps danced in the old days.
Everything has been there once before.)

Revue performance, the Palast imparts, is never for the first time, but always a return of some kind. The untold part of this story concerns the notion of the appropriation of time and histories. By returning to a subjunctive that the Palast constructed as its future, it made it specific. The future, according to the Palast, will be the result of the Palast’s staged historicisation and therefore directly related to the past of Berlin’s entertainment industry. Although this dramaturgical function was also a mode of prospective consciousness where the Palast used the past as a runway to launch into its future, it did not present a future that was as concrete as the futures of the Berlin trajectory. Sets, costumes, distributions of bodies, and the music were in fact outdated. While in revues of the ‘Berlin’-family, the framing narrative helped constructing a futurity that was signified mostly as architecture (e.g. the TV tower whose prototype had not yet been finished), shows in the ‘revue’-family continued using the same old performance parameters. In anticipating the future, it stuck with what it had acquired. This point was important to make, because *Kinder, wie die Zeit vergeht* premiered as the first revue after a reconstruction period of six weeks during the summer of 1956 (n.a., 1956:6). While the auditorium had been cleared of its ceiling paintings (dt, 1956:3) and was ready to embrace the future, the revue as an aesthetic category also prepared for the future. For now, this meant that the Palast confidently staged itself as having successfully acquired Berlin’s entertainment histories for a socialist performance future that was yet to be defined.

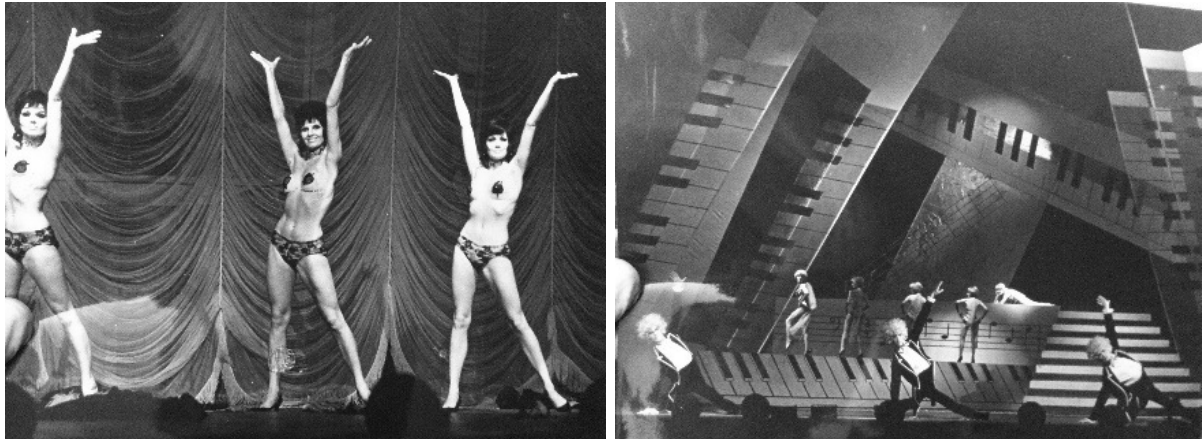
At this point in the socialist development of the Palast’s performance practice, neither dramaturgical structures nor performance practices were able to render a distinctly socialist performance future. For the next two decades, the Palast continued employing similar strategies to tell its revue-esque stories. Though not further discussed in this thesis, the revue *Das hat Berlin schon mal geseh’n* (‘Berlin has seen it before’, 1961), continued the exact same pattern six years later and historicised the Palast’s own theatrical history. Curiously, it, too, left out Charell’s revue productions. All of these historicising revues were still important, because

they prepared the elements for the performance appropriation that the next chapter discusses. What I called ‘the curatorial relationship’ above relates to the practice of reconstructing the genre’s subjunctive nonevents as milieus, localities, and time periods, and, furthermore, particular forms of bodily distributions, incorporation of circus practices, song recitals framed by dancing bodies, and so on. Chapter two will examine how performance practices were further developed underneath the radar of the conscious reconstructions that dramaturgs had penned, who, in the meantime, developed increasingly abstract revues that still portrayed similar acts and dances such as described here, but ceased reconstructing the related historical markers.



IMAGE 1.14. *Kinder, wie die Zeit vergeht* (1956). ‘Der Ewige Walzer (‘The eternal waltz’).

1.2.2. Curating fragments of practice



IMAGES 1.15-1.16. *R wie Revue*. 1.15 'E – Erotik'. 1.16 'K – Klavierkonzert'.

R wie Revue ('R as in Revue'), premiered in 1972 and was such an abstract reconstruction of acts that were understood independent from their perceived historical origin, but were now assumed to belong the Palast instead. The show's subtitle 'A cheerful Palace alphabet' indicates that it was an idea rather than a narrative that tied together the individual tableaux. The show was first mentioned in a file memo from 16 November 1971 that was appended to the 1972 repertoire proposal, which means that it was conceived after the repertoire for the year 1972 had been approved by the Magistrate⁴⁸. This belated planning had serious consequences for the creative staff, as will be explained below. The supplement reads:

Envisioned is an entertainment programme of open form, whose thematic idea allows for particular variability, but at the same moment connects the individual acts through stage design. Theme ('thread') of the revue is the alphabet. The theme will be addressed on an optical, in some instances also musical layer, and particularly taken up in the connecting texts. (Friedrichstadt-Palast, 1971:1)⁴⁹

The increasing tendency to describe a revue with the help of 'theme' instead of 'idea' expresses the Palast's tendency to aim for a form of dramaturgical unity that ceased to communicate distinct ideological messages, but understood revue in terms of its stage practices and their artistic value. *R wie Revue* elucidated in an episodic fashion the factors that characterise revue as a piece of theatre. Each of the revue's tableaux

⁴⁸ The Magistrate was the city's government, comprising the municipal administration, municipal authorities, and the city council.

⁴⁹ 'Vorgesehen ist ein Unterhaltungsprogramm offener Form, dessen thematische Idee besondere Variabilität zulässt, zugleich aber die Einzelnummern zu einem gestalteten Programm bindet. Thema ("Faden") der Revue ist das ABC, das Alphabet. Das Thema wird in der optischen, an einigen Punkten auch in der musikalischen Ebene angesprochen, insbesondere aber in verbindenden Texten abgehandelt.'

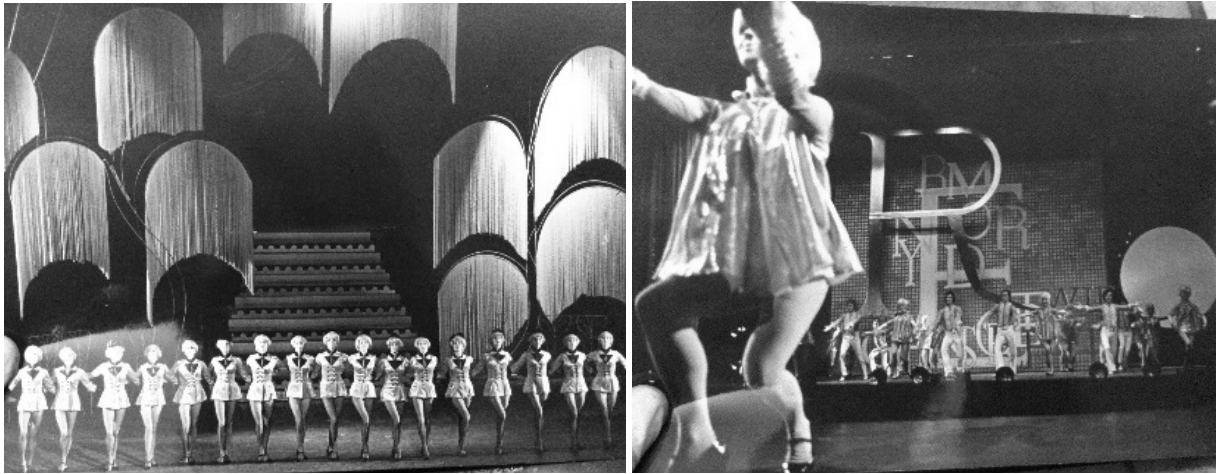
dealt with a specific revue practice that was translated into stage action through fairly literal means. Acknowledging the plethora of available letters, the file memo states: 'It goes without saying that only some of the alphabet's letters can be captured optically' (ibid). The show started with A (*Auftakt*, 'opening'), followed by E (*Erotik*, 'erotic', image 1.15), K (*Klamotte*, 'cheap farce' & *Klavierkonzert*, 'piano concert', image 1.16), M (*Mannequins*, 'models', image 1.17), P (*Parade*, 'parade'), UV (*UV-Schau*, 'ultraviolet-show'), and concluded with Z (*Zum Schluss*, 'at last', image 1.18). The individual tableaux were linked by a conférencier, who elucidated the tableau's meaning to the audience in a witty way.⁵⁰

From a dramaturgical point of view, *R wie Revue* was an emancipation from the revue's patterns of historicisation. In order to overcome the long-practiced historicisation, the Palast had to find new ways of curating the revue's recognisable forms. As a result, it shifted from historicising its practices to creating rather abstract ideas. In 1969, Heinrich Martens, the Palast's production manager, had already found in an artistic evaluation report preceding the elections for the grassroots organisation of the SED in the Palast that the Palast had not yet overcome the practices of historicisation: 'The basic idea of directly translating individual elements of revue into appropriate revue tableaux has not succeeded for creative reasons, despite a clear conception' (Martens, 1969:2)⁵¹. Martens meant that although those shows had core generative events at the basis of their re-imaginings, like in *Kinder, wie die Zeit vergeht*, their realisations on stage could not offer convincing pieces of entertainment.⁵² In *R wie Revue*, neither an existing place nor a distinct history gave rise to the reconstructions of the performance's subjunctive nonevents, but patterns of replication that, from a dramaturgical perspective, had the function of curating the revue's recognisable forms. In order to still provide sufficient justification for this rather unrealistic approach, the Palast named the tableaux after what it thought they reconstructed.

⁵⁰ I use the term 'conférencier', that is, the role of a moderator or a character mostly in European variety and revue theatre who moderates the show and leads the audience through the generally unrelated tableaux with wit and humor. The moments in which he appears are called 'Conférence'. In the socialist revue, this character also ensured a socialist, or at least Marxist-Leninist, reading of the scenes through his utterances. The British equivalent in variety theatre would be the compère or a cabaret's master of ceremony.

⁵¹ 'Die Grundidee, die einzelnen Elemente der Revue direkt in entsprechende Revuebilder umzusetzen, gelang trotz einer klaren Konzeption aus künstlerischen Gründen nicht zur Zufriedenheit.'

⁵² I am borrowing the idea of the 'core generative event' from Richard Schechner's discussion on how certain reconstructions are perceived as the true event against which any other reconstructions are benchmarked. I am using the term in order to describe the cultural imaginary that had already been formed through the existing trajectory of shows. See Schechner, 1985:63.



IMAGES 1.17-18. *R wie Revue*. 1.17 'M – Mannequin'. 1.18 'Z – Zum Schluss'.

The dramaturgical strategies that *R wie Revue* employed were actually requested by theatre critics of the time. On 15 August 1972, Ernst Schumacher of the *Berliner Zeitung* examined the season's repertoires of the theatre in Berlin and came to the conclusion that too many productions were still historicizing their scripts through the mise-en-scène, which therefore had not emanated from the here and now and could not reinterpret otherwise relevant material (Schumacher, 1972:6). Internal planning documents evidence that the Palast was always concerned about preserving the 'revue-dramaturgical integrity' (Tilgner, 1969:4)⁵³ of its productions. Innovation and socialist development could therefore only happen within the margins of established structural parameters, which this chapter has surveyed. *R wie Revue*, however, was one outcome in which the Palast staged how the revue could reimagine itself without reconstructing the local contexts associated with what had by now been a socialist form of revue. A reviewer of *Neue Zeit* acknowledged this approach: 'the staging presses every button (...) which makes me to condone the slightly stagnant contents' (B.K., 1972:12)⁵⁴. In its practice, the Palast did what it had been doing all along. However, the staging of revue tropes disconnected from historical parameters seemed like a modernisation. *R wie Revue* is an example that paved the way towards reconstructing revue's mise-en-scène, as opposed to just narrative episodes. The Palast reimaged its practices as if they emanated from the present and thus became contemporary in its time.

⁵³ 'revue-dramaturgische Ganzheit'

⁵⁴ 'Die inszenatorische Verpackung zieht alle Register (...) und läßt deshalb über den leicht abgestandenen Inhalt hinwegsehen.'

Despite the formal innovations, Ernst Schumacher also mentioned a widely-used strategy of the time that he appreciated: acute ideological problems were conveyed cheerfully. Although the Palast conveyed its new show in a cheerful manner, neither the revue's idea, nor the reconstructions, nor the revue's throughline expressed a particularly socialist stance in a literal, outspoken way. Members of the party who sceptically observed developments like *R wie Revue* started to counter the developments at the Palast: as a direct response to these formal experiments, the party's grassroots organisation found an *Agitatorenkollektiv* ('agitators' collective') in order to keep at bay the seemingly counter-progressive forces in the planning phase of the revue extravaganzas (Friedrichstadt-Palast, 1976a:2). They suggested one-on-one interviews with the Palast's artists, even detailed the questions to be asked, and kept extensive minutes of these interviews that shed light into how the theatre's staff had been observed and therefore directly controlled in their creative agency to find new formal approaches. Despite several formal experiments, like *R wie Revue*, historicisations remained a popular dramaturgical strategy until the end of the GDR's existence. Underneath these recurring dramaturgical patterns, however, revue makers at the Palast still developed strategies to advance in their daily interactions their embodied, directorial, and technological practice and thus changed the aesthetics of the socialist revue, as I will explore in the following chapters.

1.3. Coda: The revue extravaganza—a synthetic genre

In 1976, the Palast's dramaturge Wolfgang Tilgner called the revue 'a synthetic genre' (1976:37)⁵⁵, by which he referred to the revue's subjunctive modes of reconstructing ideas. Dramaturgically, the revue remained a sequence of relatively independent acts. However, revue ideas framed these acts and made them comprehensible. I have elaborated on two families of ideas, 'Berlin' and 'revue', in order to illustrate how specific ideas were reconstructed. The development of these ideas reflect how much the Palast was embedded in wider cultural practices of the time. Although Tilgner did not talk about the relationship between Friedrichstadt-Palast performance creation and performance studies, he still critically evaluated the role of Marxist cultural acquisition and appropriation for the revue extravaganza. Tracing the development of 'Berlin' as a revue idea between Weimar and *The Wylld* enabled me to show that the Palast's culture of

⁵⁵ 'genrespezifisch synthetisch'

reconstruction developed unique narrative structures, excavated specific source materials, and cultivated many histories. As I argued in the introduction of this chapter, the development of the GDR revue as a synthetic genre allowed revue makers to diversify the revue ideas and approaches of the Weimar revue and add further subjunctives. Similarly, shows that are part of the ‘revue’-family have helped to materialise memory of revue history into subjunctive nonevents and thus further diversified the stage history of a particular idea. The GDR revue is thus the vital link that connects today’s shows with its Weimar versions. Whereas the Palast revue’s East German history is still deemed insignificant, the wider implications on the development of the institution’s practices are substantial.

R wie Revue, the most abstract revue discussed in this chapter, showed how the audience’s emotional involvement in a particular show was increasingly based in the inventiveness of the institution’s capabilities to stage bodies and space, both of which are aspects that the next chapters will examine. In both categories, however, revue makers had to develop distinct strategies to diversify the socialist revue practices in ways that correspond to Marxist cultural acquisition and appropriation in much more subtle ways.

‘Of course, there is no such thing as a socialist handstand! But...’: Socialism, humanism, and virtuosity in embodied revue practice between 1950 and 1980

This chapter discusses the ways in which the revue extravaganza’s artistic practices developed in response to socialist contexts of production and reception. It extends the notions of Marxist performance appropriation from the first chapter and traces the ways in which bodily movement was appropriated in the Palast’s stage practice. The analysis of the revue’s bodily practice and how it influenced the development of the Friedrichstadt-Palast is an angle that so far has not been considered by scholars and therefore frames the greater historical argument of this chapter: by understanding the role of the performing body on the Palast’s stage between the 1950s and the late 1970s as an expression of the concurrent development of a new national entertainment culture that was based on folk and dance vocabularies, we can challenge current notions of periodising GDR theatre. At the same time, the chapter documents the Palast’s development from a variety to a revue theatre, which was a development that happened because the moving body was accorded socialist meaning; only later did it become manifested in both changing dramaturgical patterns and the institution’s self-conception. Through its practice, the revue body provided the key to the revues’ ordering and staging, but it also caused problems, as will be analysed at the end of this chapter.

In its institutional narrative, the Palast emerged as a venue for variety performance after the end of the Second World War (Carlé & Martens, 1987:100-113; Welke, 2009:13-14). Because of the heavy bomb damage, the theatre had never been fully restored to function as a *Volltheater*¹, that is, a fully functional revue theatre capable of employing all the means of its stage machinery and fly tower to alter the stage space, like it did before the war. The socialists acknowledged this fact also in the theatre’s management structures: the head of the theatre was the *Direktor* (‘general manager’), not, as otherwise customary in German theatre, *Intendant*, a theatre’s supervisor over managerial as well as creative activities in the production of theatrical work. In an interview in 1964, Wolfgang E. Struck replied to the question ‘Why are you not *Intendant*?’, ‘That

¹ The term is frequently used in internal documentation, predominantly by technicians and dramaturgs. I will elaborate on the term in relation to the theatre’s development and rebuilding in chapter 3.2.

depends whether the Palast is considered a theatre' (in Pfeiler, 1964a:6)². In this chapter, I continue from the perception that the Palast made work like a theatre, but the aesthetic that it produced was far removed from the illusions usually expected from a theatre. I argue that the theatre's limited functionality was the reason for the Palast having embraced variety forms of theatre—that is, a stringing together of acts—rather than the revue extravaganza, which would have required a theatre capable of rendering extravagance, rich décor, and unique illusions. As a result of this lack of theatrical means, the theatre focussed on the appropriation of stories (as detailed in chapter 1) and bodies. In this chapter, the above-the-line aspects of the Palast's storytelling, as examined in chapter 1, are complicated by the below-the-line, subtle, intermediate qualities of the moving bodies of the revue. The first section describes how the Palast started to understand the moving revue body by means of narrative, but slowly moved towards understanding movement in terms of a humanist practice. The second section analyses the cultural impact of the titular quote and how thinking about a particularly socialist handstand as a metaphoric technology allowed bodily movement to be appropriated within the confines of an embodied form of socialist realism. The resulting techniques extended into vocabularies of dance and created homogenising, socialist movement techniques with only limited success. In reflecting on the development of the socialist revue body, the chapter delineates the development from predominantly variety programmes in the 1950s, to book revues in the 1950s and 1960s, to musical-terpsichorean revues in the 1960s and 1970s. This development consisted of overlapping episodes, was gradual, and always aimed at re-theatricalising the revue with the help of its bodies and within the nation's artistic doctrines.

An entry into this narrative is provided by the Palast's artistic and managing director between 1954 and 1961, Gottfried Herrmann, and his titular quote from 1959, in which he denies the existence of something he referred to as 'a socialist handstand'. I had come across this rejection of the idea of 'a socialist handstand' many times, before I realized the extent to which the judgment had been qualified. In its entirety, Herrmann's idea provides the conceptual basis from which this chapter departs:

Of course there is no such thing as a socialist handstand! But there are many crucial elements in an acrobatic number, for instance the beauty of the human body, bravery, and concentration. An artistic presentation can be of humanistic character, but also of nihilistic

² 'Warum sind Sie kein Intendant?' 'Das hängt von der Frage ab, ob der Palast als Theater gewertet wird!'

character. But first and foremost, it must shape taste, and be pioneering. (Herrmann, 1959:4)³

Even though it was a memorable metaphor it is important to note that the term was only ever used *ex negativo* in the GDR and thereafter, but due to different ideological readings it came to assume different meanings. Depending on the person using it, the denial of the socialist handstand's existence was either used to underline its actual nonexistence, rejecting it as a peculiar socialist idea, or it was used as a gateway term to describe the possibilities of reimagining bodily practice within socialist contexts of production and reception. While this chapter is about the latter, the reasons for why Herrmann's term had come to be understood in different ways need to be examined first. I personally had never come across Herrmann's remark in its entirety because I had mainly been reading literature about the Palast's history written after German reunification in 1990. These writings were part of the reappraisal of East German culture after reunification that Marion Kant describes as a 'deliberate writing and rewriting of German history since 1945' (Kant, 2012:130), in which the cultural history of East Germany had been 'shredded, assessed, reassessed, and reconstituted' (ibid). They used Herrmann's term *ex negativo* in order to deny the existence of a socialist bodily practice altogether. The socialist handstand, like many parts of East German (theatre) history, was examined mostly in terms of the failed state narrative. After reunification, the histories of socialist bodies, including those of the socialist handstand, were written as though they were merely part of this systemic failure, rather than being analysed in relation to what they actually sought to achieve in performance. The interpretation of the GDR as a failed project produced ideologically motivated and ahistorical readings of performance practices that aimed to delegitimise performance practice and eventually failed to account fully for the potential of a range of socialist aesthetic experiments.

These experiments are an important part of the quote's historical repercussions though and are the histories that were silenced after German reunification. Herrmann's quote, as I have given in its full length above, had been abbreviated to merely contain the term 'socialist handstand' and in effect lost the important

³ 'Es gibt natürlich keinen sozialistischen Handstand! Aber es gibt sehr viele gute, wesentliche Momente in einer Akrobatiknummer: beispielsweise Schönheit des menschlichen Körpers, Mut, Konzentration. Eine artistische Darbietung kann humanistischen Charakter haben, ebenso, wie sie nihilistischen Charakter haben kann. In erster Linie aber muß sie geschmacksbildend wirken, vorwärtsweisend.'

qualifications that followed. Two examples illustrate how Herrmann's handstand metaphor was shortened and reinterpreted in a manner that silenced its aesthetic dimension and prioritised a political reading. Five years after reunification, in his book on the history of the Friedrichstadt-Palast, Wolfgang Schumann dedicated a chapter, entitled 'The Socialist Handstand,' to Gottfried Herrmann's tenure. Schumann claimed that 'there can neither be a "socialist" nor a "capitalist" handstand' (1995:40)⁴. He used a political—not an aesthetic—opposition to demonstrate the absurdity of a capitalist, and thus also socialist, handstand. By doing so, he rendered illegitimate the efforts of theatre makers to form socialist movement cultures, partly because he omits the qualifiers that Herrmann stated towards the end of his quote. On the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the new Friedrichstadt-Palast in 2004, Birgit Walter, theatre critic for the *Berliner Zeitung*, used Herrmann's phrase also in abbreviated form—'There is no such thing as a socialist handstand'⁵—to endorse her view of socialist entertainment theatre as seemingly apolitical, a view that she ascribed to the official party line. In her reading, the socialists wanted entertainment theatre to appear as if it had not been controlled. She explained that '[e]ntertainment in the GDR was basically known as entertaining arts. It belonged to socialist everyday life like canteen food and was taken seriously' (2004:[online])⁶. By linking the production of art to the making of canteen food, she understands the East German revue as rather mundane. 'Socialist everyday life', however, is a coded phrase and means that entertainment was indeed highly controlled and penetrated by socialist thinking.⁷ Instead of participating in the extra-daily dimension of life normally associated with the aesthetic, she construes the role of theatre makers as having submitted to the constraints of socialism. While this can be a viable perspective, I argue that the theatrical productions of the 1950s still embodied a particular confidence for the country's future. Walter's historical perspective disguises these hopes by projecting the spirit of the country's end phase back onto its very beginnings. Neither Schumann nor Walter considered from an aesthetic point of view either what Herrmann outlined after the 'but' or how he and other makers of revue theatre found ways to shape

⁴ '(...), daß es nun einmal keinen „sozialistischen“ und keinen „kapitalistischen“ Handstand gibt'

⁵ 'Es gibt keinen sozialistischen Handstand'

⁶ 'Unterhaltung hieß in der DDR grundsätzlich Unterhaltungskunst, sie gehörte zum sozialistischen Alltag wie die Kantinenversorgung und wurde ernst genommen.'

⁷ *Durchdringung* ('penetration') describes the socialists' effort to impart a socialist thinking in all aspects of politics, culture, and life. In terms of the appropriation of inherited cultural procedures, it is based on Marx's concept of dialectics and the penetration of antagonisms. The inherited society and the Marxist ideal were understood as antagonistic, and the former was thus subject to be penetrated by Marxist thought, that is, appropriated.

the bodies of the revue despite the constraints of the socialist realist doctrine. This misunderstanding fails to ask the more interesting question of what was it that really made socialist bodies move.

This chapter is about the aesthetic interpretation of the socialist handstand. I use it a gateway term whose application to a wider set of physical practices at the Friedrichstadt-Palast allows me to draw conclusions about the development of socialist movement practice. The documents that this chapter's research is based on fulfil two functions: first, they make the performing bodies tangible through surrogate structures of thought and metaphorical writings about them; second, these documents facilitate a reading of the cultural policies at the Palast of the time, which can then be related to both national developments at large and actual productions on the theatre's stage at a micro level. Based on these findings, the chapter argues that Herrmann's coinage *ex negativo* of the socialist handstand was in fact a turning point in how bodies were understood in East German socialism and that this contributed to the development of a distinct Marxist physical practice that extended well into the 1970s and the development of the theatre into a terpsichorean institution. In considering the relationship among Marxism, theatre, and virtuosity by way of a humanist understanding of the capacities of the human body, this chapter proposes to rethink socialist movement practice in terms of what I call 'socialist virtuosity'.

When Herrmann referred to humanism he alluded to a twofold argument that was prevalent at the time. Humanism in East Germany was employed as a way of marking a clear break with the Nazi past, and was at the same time part of an enduring German tendency to value the formation of 'the whole human' (Groschopp, 2013:15)⁸ through a combination of spiritual and bodily practices. In order to trace these artistic manifestations of the political and cultural conception of the moving body in socialism, the chapter revisits what Giersdorf has described as the 'history of the vanished East German choreographic landscape' (2013:8)—in this case the Friedrichstadt-Palast's embodied repertoire of the 1950s and 1960s, and the contemporaneous discourses in the circus and revue arts—to start a conversation about the world-making potential of socialist aesthetics in circus and variety performance. Herrmann's observation thus provides the starting point for a discussion of the late 1950s as a time when socialist theatre makers at the Friedrichstadt-Palast moved from a socialist theatre practice dominated by narrative to one grounded in the

⁸ 'der ganze Mensch'

body and its physical practices. Consideration of the aesthetic dimensions of Herrmann's ideas about socialist movement practice thus challenges the current periodization of GDR theatre, because it suggests that the revue prefigured a nationwide turn in the theatrical arts to thinking beyond narrative by about a decade. It also explains why the Palast took a detour via variety and circus performance in the 1950s and 1960s before it embraced the revue practices of the production show, which conveyed meaning through its socialist bodies, rather than its narrative.

Herrmann opened up a debate to understand how the body might participate in the process of cultural appropriation. Like all performing arts institutions of the time, the Palast scrutinized its institutional history in order to develop its practices in a socialist fashion, that is, in line with the ideologies discussed in the previous chapter. The techniques that structured bodily movement were hence regarded as inherited objects from the past and became subject to Marxist appropriation. In this context, the dramaturgies of cultural acquisition and appropriation discussed in chapter 1 can be regarded as a prototype of how Marxist critical thinking became translated into revue-specific theatrical expressions. Herrmann's focus on the body must therefore not be misunderstood as a rejection of narrative, but rather as an attempt to find a different way of narrating socialist principles on the stage. The moving body just added another layer of conscious storytelling, and Herrmann's handstand marks the moment when socialist realist aesthetics passed into movement.

In this respect, Herrmann's use of a handstand as a metaphor to describe a particular kind of physical practice does not seem arbitrary. The handstand is situated in a historical continuum of German movement culture and is indebted to German traditions of *Gymnastik* ('gymnastics') and its nationalist manifestations in *Turnen*, which 'focused on the education of a German, healthy, muscular, patriotic male battle force' (Kant, 2016:8) in the mid-nineteenth century. *Gymnastik* as a communal system fostered a body's abilities to form a physical national culture at a time when Germany was moving toward the formation of a nation-state. Herrmann alluded to a similar relation between physical practice and nation-building by appropriating this relation in a socialist way. To him, bodily control and specific sets of exercises were expressions of a non-competitive movement culture that aimed at forming the ways in which the body was read. This context shifts the focus of Herrmann's quote to his realization that '[a]n artistic presentation can be of humanistic character'. The handstand, or any other physical practice, makes itself available to a

project of cultural appropriation once it is understood as restorable behaviour and subject to humanist fashioning. Here, Herrmann refers to a third function of humanism that is unique to socialism. Besides the political dissociation from the Nazi past and the cultural ambition to form a whole human, the socialist aspect of humanism alludes to ‘the standardization of all our measures in matters of the “whole human”’ (Kurella, 1969:10)⁹. When Herrmann recalled *Gymnastik*’s community-forging powers and humanist qualities, he implied that physical practice might also be used as a means to standardize bodies.

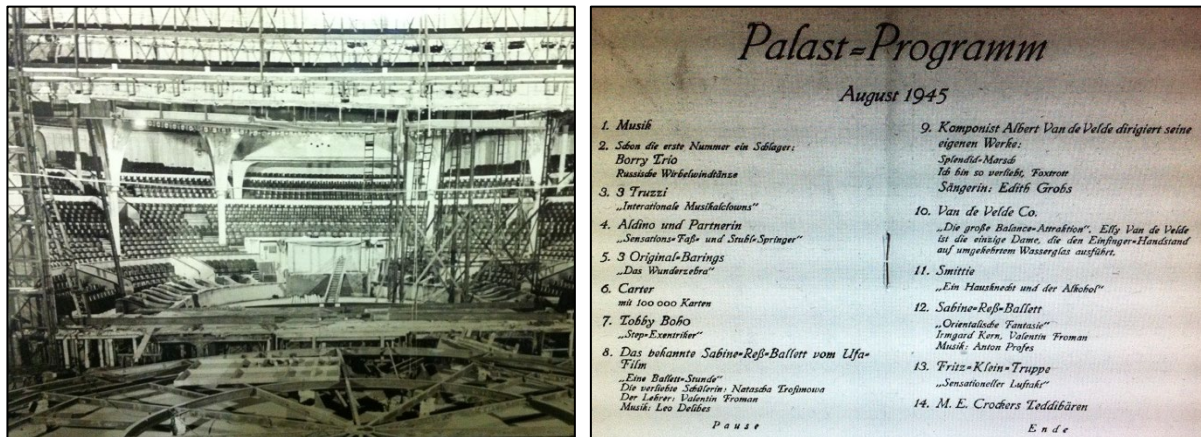
In the course of the 1960s, Herrmann’s coinage was further explored by cultural scholars, whose concepts offer evidence of the cultural impact that the socialist embodiment of the cultural and political dimensions of humanism had at the time. Although they still used his term *ex negativo*, they acknowledged the latter half of Herrmann’s quote and its projected cultural impact. In 1960, Heinz Lauckner, for example, referred to the socialist handstand in order to argue that an acrobatic number could be a role model and thus provide a ‘vital function in a socialist society (1960:8)¹⁰. Two years later, Horst Blumenfeld reframed the idea of the socialist handstand as a way to modernise performances in order to distinguish between an acrobat who ‘has not yet bade goodbye to the ideology of yesterday; and one who is completely rooted in our socialist society’ (1962:1)¹¹. The humanist values at the heart of the idea of socialism came increasingly to define the aesthetic qualities of the physical practice in revues, because it was these values that shaped its affect. In his work on political bodies in dance, Mark Franko states that ‘affect occurs when dance has transmitted the essence of a feeling’ (2002:9). This definition of affect slightly changes in its application to Marxist physical practice, because this essence is to be found in the dramaturgical thinking of movement practice. Forms of scripted affect made visible a Marxist understanding of movement as labour. The resulting socialist forms of circus practice reimagined the moving body in accordance with the socialist conceptions of humanism, as I explore below. But in order to understand fully the premises of these scripted affects, I introduce humanist narratives of early GDR revue theatre, so as to describe how these narratives were translated into experiences of virtuosity and affect.

⁹ ‘die Vereinheitlichung aller unserer Maßnahmen in bezug auf den “ganzen Menschen”’

¹⁰ ‘wesentliche Aufgabe im Sozialismus’

¹¹ ‘dessen Ideologie sich noch nicht vom vom Gestern verabschiedet hat; oder von einem, der mit beiden Beinen in unserer sozialistischen Gesellschaft steht.’

2.1. Performances and contexts: From humanist narrative to socialist bodies



IMAGES 2.01-02. Spadoni's Palast-Variété Am Zirkus 1 in August 1945. 2.01: Reconstruction of the auditorium after the damages of the Second World War. **2.02:** Programme of the first post-war inaugural show in August 1945.

Humanism appeared throughout the GDR's cultural history, albeit in differing manifestations and with decreasing leverage toward the latter half of the country's existence. When the GDR began to function as a state in 1949, the goal of 'true humanitarianism' was noted in the section on education in the first constitution.¹² At the same time, Palast shows came increasingly to incorporate classical ballets, and their narratives were revised to express socialist ideas. While humanism became the country's cultural legitimization, a 'national policy category' (Groschopp, 2013:23), and eventually a paradigm of Marxist–Leninist thought structures, the moving body itself became the subject of critical debate in discourses about training and practice. These approaches to the moving socialist body in both discourse and stage practice were underpinned by a shared reliance on the concept of humanism that resulted in different theatrical manifestations. The translation of the concept into theatre emanated from the notion of humanism as a function of the GDR's 'community of human beings' (ibid:26). Therefore, the development outlined in this section describes how the Palast learned to understand humanism as a principle of both production and reception as a form of socialist world building. However, this could only be achieved if humanism was understood in terms of labour. Only then would humanism have a clear socialist dimension and the moving body itself be able to produce and transmit an appropriate feeling and achieve its scripted affects. In this context, the body was only understood to produce meaning if movement was, somehow, coded as 'socialist'.

¹² According to the country's second constitution of 1968, 'humanism' and 'humanitarian virtues' were to be disseminated through culture (Groschopp, 22).

Tropes of ‘humanism’ thus served to recognise the body’s capacity to produce meaning in its own right, which challenged the conventional narrativity of the Palast revues, whose inner coherence had conventionally been achieved through a common theme or a meaningful idea. In the end, socialist humanism, when translated into movement, destabilized the conventional dramaturgies of the revue by stabilizing the body through standardized meaning-making processes.

When circus performer Marion Spadoni reopened the Friedrichstadt-Palast after the Second World War in 1945 (then under the name of Palast-Variété), her shows were formally presented as variety programs in front of the theatre’s safety curtain, while the main stage was cleared of rubble (image 2.1).¹³ The artists for Spadoni’s shows were primarily recruited from her father’s agency network for circus artists. Dancers were cast amidst the post-war struggles and casting calls addressed variety dancers predominantly from other institutions, like Wintergarten, Scala, and the city’s opera houses. Spadoni’s artistic concerns were about a return to a pre-war aesthetic of variety entertainment. In her programmes, circus acts complemented specialty acts and were framed by dance numbers and orchestral renditions. The first show after the end of the Second World War, simply named *Palast-Programm August 1945* (image 2.2), represents the prototype of the typical Spadoni show. The first act started with a recital of orchestral music, followed by a Russian whirling dance act (Borry Trio), international musical clowns (3 Truzzi), a barrel and chair jumping act (Aldino and partner), a zebra taming act (3 Original Barings), a card trick act (Carter), a tap eccentric (Tobby Boho), and finished with a dance performance by the Sabine Reß ballet of the Ufa film studios.¹⁴ The second act opened with orchestral music by Albert Van de Velde, followed by Elly Van de Velde’s one-finger handstand on a water glass, a comedy number by Smittie, another ballet performance by the Sabine Reß ballet, an aerial artistic by the Fritz Klein troupe, and finished with a bear taming act by M. E. Crocker. Marion Spadoni, daughter of famed juggler and later talent agent Paul Spadoni, had the contacts needed to

¹³ The Theater des Volkes, the Friedrichstadt-Palast’s name during Nazi rule, closed its doors during the mobilization of civilian-associated resources in Germany’s Total War on 1 September 1944; the last performance was Walter Kollo’s operetta *Wie einst im Mai* (‘The distant May’). The Palast’s stage house burned down following airstrikes in March 1945. It reopened on 17 August 1945. Officially, the high costs provided a reason for the city’s magistrate to take over the Palast and place it under government control in 1947 (Schumann, 1995).

¹⁴ Ufa (Universum Film AG) is a German motion picture house. Established in 1917, it produced pioneering work in German film (like *Dr. Mabuse the Gambler* (1922) or *Metropolis* (1927)). After the company was occupied by the Red Army in 1945, it was fused with Studio Babelsberg in Potsdam and produced films under Russian supervision. Sabine Reß choreographed films like *Viktor und Viktoria* (1933), *Jud Süß* (1940), became ballet mistress at Komische Oper in 1947, and choreographed routines for Marika Rökk movies.

book a programme that was a mix of available talent in post-war Europe. Her programmes remained typical for variety programmes, which relied on the ‘separateness of the individual acts’ (Double, 2012:12) that were connected by a *conférencier*, not necessarily through elements of design or practice.

This clear distinction between bodily practices is also reflected in the German language, which does not provide a word that encompasses aestheticized performing bodies in general. Instead it distinguishes between *Tänzer* (‘dancers’) and *Artisten* (‘circus performers’). The GDR dictionary for entertainment arts, *Unterhaltungskunst A-Z*, has *Artistik* on record as an art form whose presentations’ ‘contents are autonomous within an entertainment program’ (Bartsch et. al, 1975:19)¹⁵. *Artist* and *Artistik* exist in the same relationship as the *dancer* (as the executor) relates to the *dance* (an umbrella term for several bodily practices). This conceptual distinction has caused *Artistik* and *Tanz* to be regarded as independent forms of bodily labour, with *Artistik* being the essential element of the Palast show between the 1950s and the early 1970s, and dance leading a second-order existence primarily as insert or act finale during that period. In the early years of the GDR, dance theorists increasingly tried to combine both forms of bodily expression to create another form of uniform socialist expressiveness, an idea this chapter will continue to develop.

Seen from the point of view of bodily practice, this distinction has always been a vital part of the revue, as a revue’s idea becomes resolved in an episodic fashion. These episodes, constructed and organised as tableaux, frame the incident of both creation and beholding. Revues thus came into existence as an array of images, each containing the revue’s resources of meaning: bodies, ornaments, costumes, sets, technologies, and natural elements, like water and earth. In the previous chapter, I have discussed ‘tableaux’ in relation to literal meaning making and dramaturgical structures. This chapter lends the concept of the ‘tableau’ further weight by understanding it as what Patrice Pavis refers to as ‘spatiotemporal “blocks”’ (1996:159). In the old Friedrichstadt-Palast, these were sequences of primarily physical actions. As Pavis suggests, ‘the sequence of these chronotopes will provide the key to the *mise-en-scène*: its dynamic, logic, and physical effect on the spectator’ (ibid: 163). This means that, in relation to the revue’s overall idea, forms of embodied practice worked upon the understanding through their separateness.

¹⁵ ‘inhaltlich selbstständig innerhalb eines Unterhaltungsprogrammes’

This became especially visible in the revues by Spadoni's successor, Nicola Lupo (Palast director between 1947 and 1954), who extended the proportion of dance and incorporated classical ballets into his variety shows. These ballet inserts also gave the shows their name, like *Coppélia* in the February 1953 program (see image 2.4). After Spadoni's non-narrative variety programs, Lupo's use of ballet provided an underlying narrative to an otherwise loose arrangement of variety performances. Although the ballets remained an insert, their prominence in the Palast's promotional material (see the covers of the programme booklets in image 2.3 and 2.4) and the naming of the revues after these inserts suggests that narrative was meant to assume a role greater than would otherwise have been usual for a revue. And in fact, the treatment of ballet narratives had been a wider cultural issue at the time.



IMAGES 2.03-04. Lupo's revues. 2.03: Programme booklet of *Polowetzer Tänze* (1951). **2.04:** Programme booklet of *Coppelia* (1953).

With its return to narrative forms of the ballet, the Palast reflected a national search for a standard vocabulary of socialist dance.¹⁶ Discussions about this search peaked during the first conference on *Realism*

¹⁶ The Palast ballet had been formed under the ballet masters Sabine Reuss and Jens Keith in 1946 (Carlé and Martens, 1987:149).

in *Dance* in 1953. It was organized by the State Commission for Artistic Affairs¹⁷ in order to determine the dancing body's position in a framework of socialist meaning making in the theatre. Leading up to the conference, delegate Martin Sporck,¹⁸ in his article in the magazine *Weltbühne*,¹⁹ asked: 'Is dance actually a genre of art in its own right? Does it have specific features that distinguish it from all the other arts?' (Sporck, 1953:9)²⁰ He ended his polemic by endorsing new narratives, instead of new forms of dance: 'What we need are new ballets, socialist in content and national in form' (ibid:14)²¹. His provocation tried to standardise a discourse on the creation of movement as being dependent on its narrative framing only, which was contingent upon a socialist-realist understanding of movement. According to dance scholar Jens Richard Giersdorf, 'socialist realism not only depicted and critiqued social structures but also supplied the way out of the contemporary societal system and into a brighter future via socialism' (2013:60). Art, including dance, was generally understood in literary terms, and as working through and upon the understanding rather than the body. A non-literary art such as dance, therefore, could not be understood to have an existence independent from the narratives it was supposed to present. At the Palast, ballet was thus supposed to provide narrative and, with reference to Sporck's request, a ballet's improved narrative was even a way to furnish the revue's socialist character. The pursuit to turn performance vocabularies humanist thus started by rethinking ballet's narratives.

Lupo's ballet revues illustrate how these early attempts to translate socialist-realist doctrine into bodily practice were in fact about narrative framing, not about practice as such: whereas dance's ideological potential lay in its capacity to shape audience response by narrative means, circus performance was understood as lacking this unambiguous referential quality and did not seem to offer the same potential for

¹⁷ the Staatliche Kommission für Kunstangelegenheiten

¹⁸ Martin Sporck was in fact a pseudonym used by Gustav Just, who led the SED's art division at the time (Stabel, 2000:217).

¹⁹ *Weltbühne*, which was founded in 1905 as a theatre magazine and later also included topics of politics and economics, was a platform of the radical democratic left during the Weimar Republic and was abolished by the Nazis. Famous contributors were Kurt Tucholsky and Erich Kästner, amongst others. The paper was re-established in East Germany in 1946 and was considered to 'self-evidently and consistently represent the ambitions of the Socialist Unity Party' (Kabus, 2003:216). Contributions such as Just's can therefore be assumed to be true to party principles.

²⁰ 'Ist eigentlich der Tanz eine eigene, selbstständige Kunstgattung? Hat er spezifische Besonderheiten, die ihn von anderen Künsten unterscheiden?'

²¹ 'Was wir brauchen, sind also neue Ballette, sozialistisch im Inhalt und national in der Form.'

the communication of socialist values. Therefore, the necessary socialist-realist critique was constructed through reworkings of the ballets' narratives so that they delivered humanist statements. For instance, Lupo's April 1951 program dubbed *Polowetzer Tänze* ('Polovtsian Dances') featured Alexander Borodin's famous ballet insert from his posthumously completed 1890 opera *Prince Igor* (image 2.3.). Whereas the original opera scene is set in the Polovtsian camp where Prince Igor is held captive and the Polovtsian maidens dance to victor Khan Konchak's glory, the Palast rendition told the story as an attempted escape by the nameless maidens, who had apparently been captured by the Tartars. After Khan's command to bring the 'exotic, blonde beauty' (Friedrichstadt-Palast, 1951:n.p.)²² into his tent, the captured slave women are upset and wake the whole camp. 'The ensuing dances mirror the unspoiled temper of this tribe' (ibid)²³. In the early post-war years, the Palast staged dance in a context that concerned the fate of slaves, not princes, and thereby rendered a humanist appropriation of the original plot. A reviewer from *Neue Zeit*, a newspaper published by the East German Christian Democrats (Ost-CDU), praised this concept as pioneering: 'The Friedrichstadt-Palast had made a brave step into uncharted territory: classical ballet on the variety stage' (n.a., 1951:5)²⁴. Choreographed by revue dancer Egon Wüst and extravagantly decorated by the Friedrichstadt-Palast's in-house workshops, the Polovtsian Dances concluded the program's first act. Although neither the archive nor reviews provide sufficient evidence as to how much the actual stage choreography in fact deviated from that which supported the original story, it does show that the ballet had been reframed by alternative narratives, which appropriated an otherwise conventional variety programme towards a socialist horizon.

When Gottfried Herrmann succeeded Nicola Lupo as director, his work linked numerous dances through the narrative of a book revue. In this new integrated form of revue, a coherent story drove the occurrence of dances, music, circus acts, and spoken narrative.²⁵ The 1954 hit show *Einmal am Rhein* ('Once upon a Rhine') featured folk dances that emanated organically from a constructed narrative: once the river steamer sets sail and the captain, the mate (a comedian), 'sailors of the Friedrichstadt-Palast' (Friedrichstadt-

²² 'fremdartige, blonde Schönheit'

²³ 'In den nun folgenden Tänzen spiegelt sich das ganze urwüchsige Temperament dieses Volksstammes wider.'

²⁴ 'Der Friedrichstadt-Palast hat einen mutigen Schritt in Neuland gewagt: klassisches Ballett auf der Varietébühne.'

²⁵ I am basing the idea of the book revue on the popular trend of the book musical in America. On the evolution of the American book musical see Gennaro, 2011: 45-61.

Palast, 1956:n.p.) (the male dancers), jugglers, magicians, trapeze artists, some real sea lions, and ‘the dancing fishes’ (ibid) (the female dancers) have entered the boat, a series of stories illustrated the joys of a Rhine cruise (image 2.5). The revue returned to the Friedrichstadt-Palast stage in October 1955 and 1956 with alternating artistic acts by maintaining the revue’s basic narrative structure. Dances of *Einmal am Rhein* were imagined in a context of folk aesthetics that created a sense of ancestry and shared local history, rooted in a perceived humanist German tradition. At that time in the GDR, folk was used to ‘construct a national identity distinct from that of West Germany, which laid claim to all of German history and culture’ (Giersdorf, 2013:29). The folk movement extended into areas of literature, music, and dance; in dance, it entailed not only its aestheticized stage forms, but also forms of community dances. Herrmann used folk’s ‘potential to manufacture localized and national community identifications’ (ibid) by assuming that folk aesthetics actually displayed an East German identity. Folkloristic aestheticisations of any given content therefore engendered a distinct socialist reading of the world. In the wine cellar tableau, for example, the Dance of the Spirits of Wine (image 2.6), performed by the women of the corps de ballet, was framed by the cellarer’s song recitals (Otto Hiller) and a clown act by tipsy Speedy Larking. These folksy approaches towards story telling and the presentation of dances imparted a particularly socialist tone. The revue showed all that could happen if the Friedrichstadt-Palast ensemble and orchestra were put on a riverboat together with a group of specialty performers in a West-German region.



IMAGES 2.05-06. *Einmal am Rhein* (1956). 2.05: Set of the Rhine river cruise. 2.06: Set of the wine cellars.

This revue becomes culturally relevant because it extended an East German project of humanist world-making potential in the form of dance and acrobatics to the West German river Rhine. Conceptualizing the Rhine and its surrounding cultural landscape of the Rhineland in the terms of socialist aesthetics appropriates an important German memory landscape. In his study of the formation of a German national memory, Rudy Koshar describes the Rhineland as representing an important and founding aspect

of the German ‘national spirit by depicting medieval castle ruins and natural settings as parts of a German cultural landscape independent of states or contemporary political boundaries’ (2000:21). Additionally, the West German capital of Bonn and numerous Prussian monuments commemorating the German unification of 1871 are also located in the Rhineland. Although this approach was not particularly discussed by reviewers, *Einmal am Rhein* shows how cultural producers of East Germany used the GDR’s conception of folk projected onto a West German memory landscape in order to accommodate the official party line in their socialist narratives. These had been geared toward a model of German reunification that preserved the social achievements of the GDR.²⁶ This revue taps into the same mind-set of socialist cultural markers expressed through the use of folk dance and stories based in vernacular East German practice extending into an imagined West Germany.



IMAGES 2.07-09. First issues. 2.07: *Artistik* (12/1954). **2.08:** *Unterhaltungskunst* (1/1969). **2.09:** *Journal für Unterhaltungskunst. Journal Art & Action* (1/1989).

Outside the theatre, the ways in which the socialist moving body was imagined progressively changed. Parallel to Herrmann’s book revues and the official party strategy to aim for German unification under Eastern narration, party tactics involved confrontation with capitalist influences and the development of truly socialist structures of thought. This included the founding of *Artistik* magazine for the dissemination of socialist views on variety and revue practice. It further led to the development of an explicitly socialist regime of physical training with the establishment of the State School of Circus Arts in Berlin. While the

²⁶ The implications of scenarios of German reunification on literature during the 1950s and 1960s (Brockmann, 2015:112–13).

school shaped the performer's body prior to entering the industry, the *Artistik* magazine examined how existing practices in the industry might be developed along socialist lines. These developments eventually conditioned Herrmann's proposal to shift attention away from narrative and toward an emphasis on the performer's body and labour only three years after *Einmal am Rhein*.²⁷

Artistik magazine, founded in 1954, was a magazine for professionals published by the arts union to discuss how to develop the arts of revue and circus not only in terms of dramaturgy and framing, but also of notions of practice, virtuosity, and working conditions (see images 2.5-7 for the first issues' covers).²⁸ In terms of the Marxist acquisition of performance practices, *Artistik* ensured a particular reading of sedimented practices of the past. Whereas the narratives of the revues in East Germany could easily be controlled by dramaturgs, bodily practices such as dance and circus performances were much more equivocal in the way they produced meaning. Consequently, *Artistik* was a way of policing bodily practice through writing about it. It offered a public platform through which discussions about the aesthetic challenges and structural changes could take place. An examination of the magazine's entire publication run (December 1954 to June 1990) suggests that responses to party dictates were highly sophisticated and even polyvocal, with theatre directors, dramaturgs, creative directors, choreographers, costume designers, program directors, critics, and political officials contributing to the discussions, channelling their understandings of socialist realism. For that reason, *Artistik* is a good barometer for thought, as its discussions not only channel how doctrine affected programming of the repertoire, but also hint at how the body's socialist repertoire grew over time. This was primarily evidenced by debates over future forms of socialist theatre and training establishments.

²⁷ Although it had been assumed that historical and dialectical materialism provided appropriate means for the societal change in the GDR under Soviet guidance, the early years of the GDR lacked vernacular and relevant scientific approaches that would help analyse the GDR's unique situation. The GDR's first branch of social sciences had been established as late as 1957 (Glaeßner, 1982:207), whose purpose it was to establish an East Germany sociology. This development falls between the death of Stalin (1953), the ensuing de-Stalinisation of East Germany, and the increasing urge to find national solutions on the socialist trajectory. *Artistik* magazine was founded amidst this search for a national identity in 1954.

²⁸ The magazine's imprint states as publisher 'Gewerkschaft Kunst, Fachgruppe Artistik'. It was ten to thirty-five pages long and came out monthly between December 1954 and February 1990. Additionally, there are a number of specially edited inserts, between five and twenty-five pages each, authored by party functionaries, critics, scholars, dramaturgs, dancers, choreographers, musicians, cabaret artists, and circus performers on current issues in the revue arts, e.g., 'Arts and Entertainment' (1964/4), 'Revue Dance and Its Perspective' (1964/10), 'Reception in the Entertainment Arts' (1969/1), 'Creative Cooperation' (1975/3), 'Aesthetics of Entertainment' (1984/1), 'Rock Theatre' (1988/5).

Language emanated as an important signifier for identifying a contributor's agenda and whether s/he thought in terms of bodily practice, or in terms of narrative by extension of realist doctrine. Herrmann, an artist himself, started discussing his art form in the terms of humanism; so did many of the choreographers, performers and circus directors who contributed to the *Artistik* magazine.²⁹ Cultural theoreticians and party functionaries tended to stick to framing the performing arts in ideas of dramaturgy and desired political effect.³⁰ It could generally be said that practitioners employed humanist tropes, because they tended to work at the places of culture's actual production, i.e. bodies as material manifestations of doctrine, whereas dramaturgs and party functionaries conversed in the language of the doctrine's literary meaning-making. Even the planning documents (primarily repertoire proposals and evaluation reports) that were produced by the Palast do not channel embodied humanist virtues, but frame the Palast's work in dramaturgical terms. Both of the identified groups aimed to shape technique, but one did it by finding ways to embody socialist-realist doctrine, the other in order to enforce a particular reading of a practice by shaping the imagined performance contexts of each show.

One year after the founding of *Artistik*, the *Staatliche Artistenschule*, the State School of Circus Arts, was founded in East Berlin. It focused on the 'systematic nurturing of young talent ... in order to secure the future of the circus arts' (Vogel, 1956:1)³¹. The former custom that circus performers were educated within their own families was replaced by a state-sponsored education, removing training from its lower-middle-class origins. Inge Regener, member of the Ministry of Culture, described the tradition of the performer family as having developed in the 'societally unfavourable conditions' (1961:1)³² of pre-socialist times. Although circus semiotician Paul Bouissac does not refer to socialist circus education, he does describe this lower-class standing of circus performers: 'The circus originally was a strategy of ephemeral acceptance and precarious survival devised by ethnic minorities that were not allowed to settle for business

²⁹ For example, Langenfeld, 1956 (Langenfeld was director of Leipzig's circus Aeros and critiqued the prevailing party-political approach towards circus practice) or Schork, 1956 (he was choreographer at Aeros and advocated for the artist's voice to be heard rather than the commentaries of superior administrative bodies of the party).

³⁰ Most editorials were authored by party functionaries and thus framed the contributions to the magazine in a party-political context. Heinz Lauckner, a dramaturg, synthesized in many of his contributions the line of the party with the artistic aspiration of the genre in terms of literal meaning-making and an awareness for historical progression, e.g. Lauckner, 1960. Variety director Hansjürgen Pfeiler described how dramaturgical ideas of variety must impart a socialist sense of life in order to be considered part of East German life (Pfeiler, 1963).

³¹ 'systematische Förderung junger Talente (...) um die Zukunft unserer artistischen Kunst zu sichern'

³² 'gesellschaftlich ungünstigen Bedingungen'

in villages or towns' (2010:12). These circus communities, whose existing social networks extended beyond the places of training and performance, produced spectacles that drew on the performers' otherness. In the GDR, as pointed out by Regener, such labour conditions were thought to be no longer compatible with the GDR's humanist aspirations to a post-class society, because the communities that produced were deemed fundamentally different from those that consumed. The traditional circus communities were deemed unable to produce, in the eyes of the socialists, relevant socialist art. The school thus supplanted the ephemeral familial networks and with them replaced traditions espoused by, and connected to, such groups. The school thus not only promoted performance skills but focused on 'developing a socialist consciousness to the benefit of the people' (Regener, 1961:1)³³. In 1961, the school trained 45 students (ibid). The first year focused on skills training (gymnastics, dance, acrobatics, juggling, high wire), while in the second and third years, the students advanced in one of the skills. The final year focused on compiling sets of skills into an acrobatic number. All students received training in languages (Russian, English, French), history, musicology, rhythmic, and Marxist aesthetics. The establishment of the national training institution suggests that the body was recognized as having substantial socialist potential. *Artistik* contributor Tilo Vogel commented on the importance of 'fostering aesthetic aspects [to] establish an artistic style applicable to us' (1956:2)³⁴. Still, this seemed to be tied to a narrative framing, as circus arts were 'to be infused with socialist content' (n.a., 1961:4)³⁵ and thus brought into line with the thinking set out during the 1953 conference on socialist dance.

While the infrastructure for socialist cultural production was established, humanist ideas were repeatedly proclaimed as essential for variety performance. In 1955, Harry-Heinz Neumann pronounced that

[b]uilding a new German culture, which is imbued with a humanist spirit and true democracy, in all areas of the fine and performing arts of the German Democratic Republic also requires the acrobats to let go of the notion of 'Whatever pleases (the audience) is allowed'. (1955:1)³⁶

³³ 'Bildung des sozialistischen Bewußtseins zum Wohle des Volkes'

³⁴ 'Herausbildung eines für uns gültigen artistischen Stils'

³⁵ 'mit sozialistischem Inhalt erfüllt'

³⁶ 'Der Aufbau einer neuen, von humanistischem Geist und wahrer Demokratie erfüllten deutschen Kultur auf allen Gebieten der bildenden und darstellenden Kunst in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik fordert auch von der Artistik, sich von der traditionellen Auffassung „Erlaubt ist – was gefällt!“ zu lösen.'

This gave revue practice a key political role in the engineering of the new society. Through humanism, artists were meant to construct a counter-memory by altering an existing, sedimented set of movements. In other words, artists were meant to acquire and embody the past by appropriating these practices in humanist terms. This reconceptualization is the essence of Marxist cultural appropriation. Performance scholar Joseph Roach describes similar cultural practices in terms of kinaesthetic imagination. If we were to think in similar terms about the project of cultural appropriation in the GDR, Roach's definition helps to frame Neumann's polemic as a 'transmission (and transformation) of memory through movement' (Roach, 1996:26), which allowed for some degree of continuity, but at the same time demanded a reconstruction and reinterpretation of practice that corresponds to what Roach calls a 'specialized social organization' (ibid:27). Humanism was used to mobilize theatrical practices and force dancers and performers to rethink their stage behaviours. Neumann went on to proclaim that the GDR was not in need of 'memory artists [who] are not willing to enhance their performance through the development of new tricks and new approaches' (1955:1)³⁷. Marxist cultural appropriation sought to shape taste by rethinking the body's practice, but it had not yet been able to provide a common language, either spoken or as movement, that would allow practitioners to identify and reshape specific behaviours that had come to be understood as capitalist vestiges.

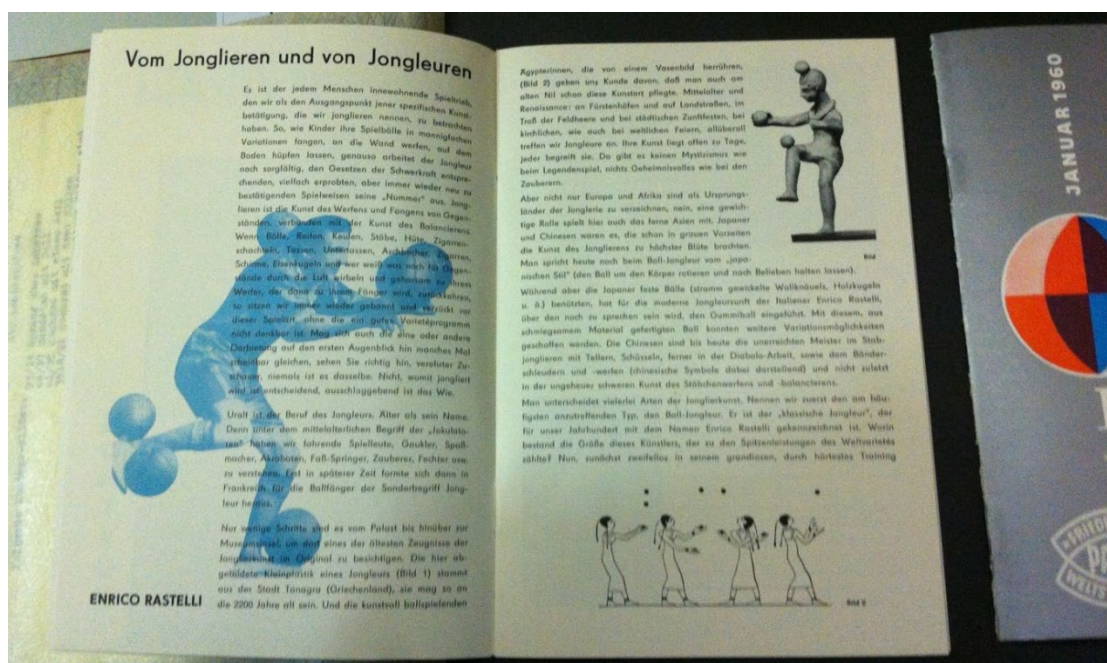


IMAGE 2.10. *Ein Ball rollt um die Welt, programme booklet (1959/12-1960/1) 'On Juggling and Jugglers'.*

³⁷ "Gedächtniskünstler" [die] nicht bereit sind, durch Erarbeitung neuer Tricks und die Erschließung neuer Wege ihre Leistungen zu verbessern.'

An example of how such a counter-memory about practice could be formed is given by Gottfried Herrmann's 1959 revue *Ein Ball rollt um die Welt* ('A Ball Rolls around the Globe'), which turned the practice of juggling into a genre fable and demonstrated a strong desire to shape the bodily stage practices of circus, although with no coherent approach as to how this was meant to be done. In this show, Herrmann illustrated the ideological difference that the socialist reading of humanism can make when the labour of Soviet and Western variety practices are compared. Inspired by the life of juggler Enrico Nardini, the Palast fable imagines the life of Italian Russian-trained juggler Enrico Rastelli and follows the performer across Europe. The revue's tableaux followed a familiar pattern: each scene represented a distinct year and locale, starting in 1908 in an unnamed Russian town, and on to Chicago, where Rastelli is betrayed by greedy managers. The revue ends in 1950 at the State Circus of Leningrad. The revue sought to show that a practice is affected by social conditions. The program booklet explained this process by describing the practice by way of its object, the juggling ball, and its social history (image 2.10). In addition to that, the displayed social contexts of the show were eventually intended to be seen as influencing Rastelli's practice:

[The juggling ball] rolls, driven by the fanaticism of a person possessed by his endeavour, it rolls, driven and harassed by the managers' greed for money, and it eventually rolls in beautiful harmony toward a happy future. Let's attend to the ball and the one who juggles it. (Friedrichstadt-Palast, 1959:n.p.)³⁸

The revue was accompanied by an exhibition on juggling in the theatre's foyer, which featured 'pictures of popular jugglers that go back to the depiction of juggling Egyptians in vase paintings 200 years before the turn of the eras, loud and colourful posters from the beginning of the twentieth century that leave a peculiar impression on us today' (n.a., 1960:13)³⁹. By exhibiting the material culture of an artist's labour, the Palast demonstrated its genuine interest in the techniques of the juggler, on and off the stage. It also framed the happenings on stage and imparted—through surveying the history of the practice—the humanist aspect of the revue's concept. This revue and what happened alongside it show that the Palast increasingly tried to move beyond narrative in its attempts to develop a theory of the socialist labouring

³⁸ '[Der Ball] rollt, getrieben vom Fanatismus eines von seiner Aufgabe Besessenen, er rollt, getrieben und gehetzt von der Geldgier der Manager und er rollt endlich in schöner Harmonie einer glücklichen Zukunft entgegen. Begleiten wir den Ball und denjenigen, der ihn wirft.'

³⁹ 'Fotos berühmter Jongleure, zurückgehend bis zu Vasenbildern ballspielender Ägypterinnen 200 Jahre vor der Zeitenwende, schreiend bunte Plakate vom Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts, die zum Teil heute auf uns einen sehr kuriosen Eindruck machen.'

body. On the stage, however, the revue's objects—that is, 'the identifiable elements that contributed to the meaning of the acts' (Bouissac, 2010:22)—were still not the performance practices per se. Instead, the revue staged recognizable elements of contextual narration (mostly through geographical markers) and the juggling ball itself. Theatre critic Werner Hoerisch appreciated how the display of localities related to ideological implications: Rastelli was betrayed in capitalist Chicago, but had his greatest success under humanist conditions in Leningrad. The actor playing Rastelli, Ernst Kuhn-Montego, portrayed the practice of the original Nardini 'most convincingly' (1960:9)⁴⁰ in that he 'marvellously mastered the fascinating language of the cunning play with clubs, hoops, and balls' (ibid)⁴¹. Despite him pointing out the importance of contexts in the act of reading the performance, Hoerisch does not indicate whether or not Rastelli's movement actually responded to the changing geographical contexts. But according to the program booklet, this 'how' was indeed to be deduced from the context of the tableaux: 'Although some juggling acts may seem similar at first sight, if you look again, dear spectator, it's never really the same. It's not about what is juggled with, but the how is crucial' (Friedrichstadt-Palast, 1959:n.p.)⁴². This written intervention into the ways in which the revue was intended to be watched demonstrates how the Palast sought to convey the juggler's labour by shaping its contexts. A reviewer in *Neue Zeit* does not see this relation between context and practice, but merely praises Montego's juggling skills as 'first class' (uwe, 1959:6)⁴³. This shows how the Palast meant to influence the audience's reception of the performance by framing the artistic processes as ideologically different in its programme booklet. In the end, Montego, a West-German juggler, was employed in a revue in socialist Germany and it would have been surprising if his performance were labelled as being of a particularly West German character. Instead, a reviewer in *Neues Deutschland* noticed how the 'very vivid portrayal of the circus act's historical setting' (W.H., 1959:6)⁴⁴ contributed to the critical success of the revue. It is remarkable that reviewers cherished the portrayal of such contexts and related it to the Friedrichstadt-Palast being an East German institution, but at the same time did not recognise their

⁴⁰ 'in den wesentlichsten Zügen'

⁴¹ 'in der faszinierenden Sprache des raffinierten Spiels mit Keulen, Reifen, Bällen'

⁴² 'Mag sich auch die ein oder andere Darbietung auf den ersten Augenblick bin manches Mal scheinbar gleichen, sehen Sie richtig hin, verehrter Zuschauer, niemals ist es dasselbe. Nicht, womit jongliert wird ist entscheidend, ausschlaggebend ist das Wie.'

⁴³ 'allererste Klasse'

⁴⁴ 'sehr lebendige Schilderung der historischen Mileus der Artistik'

ideological purchase and how such contexts were supposed to change the reception of the performances, as it was intended by the Palast. It is therefore the more important to emphasise the institution's efforts in expressing their socialist partisanship through such framing. Although the Palast meant to shape the perception of artistic labour through its contexts, it did not yet focus on particular kinaesthetic attributes, that is, its production.

In the next section I turn toward what I call 'socialist virtuosity', which involves the conceptual shift of stepping beyond narrative to a consideration of the artist's labour.

2.2. The labour of socialist virtuosity

In the late 1950s, it was not only at the Friedrichstadt-Palast that makers of socialist performances talked about bodies. The whole field of the circus and variety arts tried to find ways that would acknowledge the significance of moving bodies beyond the narratives of the shows into which they were incorporated. The development of socialist virtuosity was in fact the answer to a conceptual paradox engendered through the combination of understanding the performer's body in Marxist terms of labour and the interpretation of that labour in terms of socialist realism. But before the conceptualization of socialist virtuosity can be fully grasped, the history of this stage practice as a means of stepping beyond narrative must be noted. It starts by revisiting Herrmann's socialist handstand quote and what it actually offered to practitioners in the field.

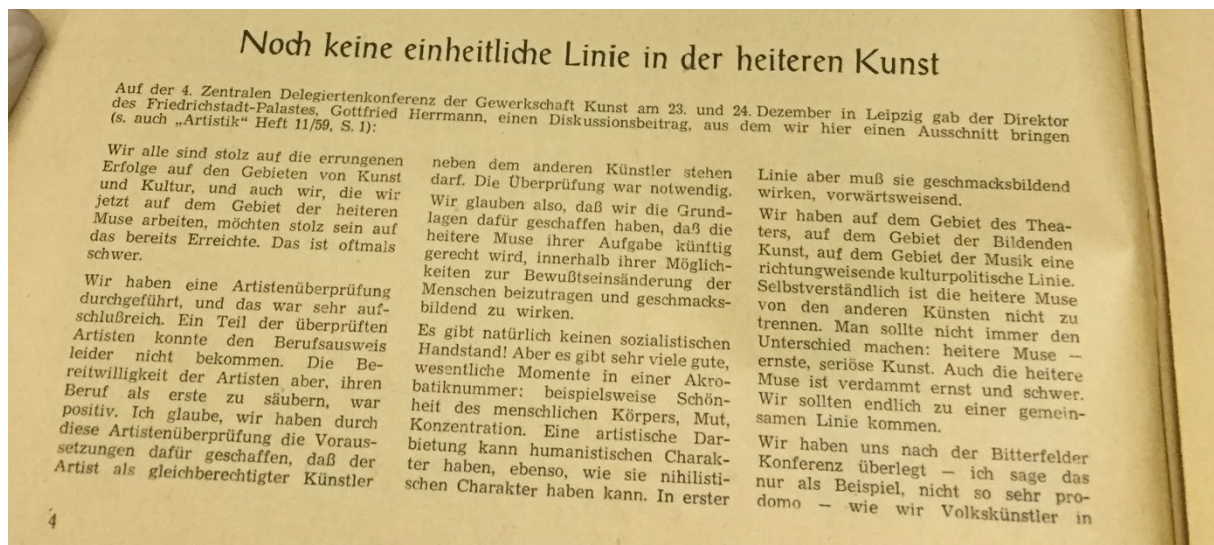


IMAGE 2.11. 'Still no uniform line in the art of amusement'.

In December 1959, *Artistik* published a comment piece by Herrmann, entitled ‘Noch keine einheitliche Linie in der heiteren Kunst’ (‘Still no uniform line in the art of amusement’, image 2.11), based on a speech he gave during the Fourth Central Delegate Conference of the Arts Union of the GDR.⁴⁵ This is where Herrmann’s socialist handstand quote appeared for the first time. Seen in the historical context in which he was writing, it becomes apparent that he aimed at opening up a debate about the usefulness of the regulatory framework, introduced in 1958, that aimed at validating all performing artists, and whether there were more useful ways to turn performance practice socialist. In the country’s search for a socialist aesthetic for *die heitere Muse* (‘the arts of amusement’), that is, variety and revue performance, the state employed the administrative means that it had available. But to Herrmann, these were of little use in his attempts actually to shape a bodily aesthetic toward the socialist project. Although the Ministry of Culture had worked meticulously to screen performers’ acts for quality—it had received 1,325 applications, of which 800 applicants received their vocational certificate⁴⁶—Herrmann referred to this process as ‘insightful’ (1959:4)⁴⁷, but saw it as a political tool only, as it did not help him in describing what ‘socialist’ actually meant in terms of attitudes and performance practice. Heinrich Martens, Palast production manager at the time, named the aspects under which the practices submitted by performers for licensing were reviewed ‘[i]dea, originality, difficulty level, execution, equipment, score and background music, speaking technique, voice leading’ (in Lopatta, 1962:1)⁴⁸. But in Herrmann’s view, the framework did not define how those markers were supposed to foster uniquely socialist aesthetics. Like the founding of *Artistik* magazine, the validation process sought to achieve some measure of bodily conformity to new socialist norms. But at the same time it was also more systematic in that no performing artist was able to evade the scrutiny of their skills and aestheticized labour. Politically, the validation process generated a rhetoric of exclusivity that

⁴⁵ For 4. Zentrale Delegiertenkonferenz der Gewerkschaft Kunst in Leipzig on 23 and 24 September 1959, see *Artistik* issue 1959/11.

⁴⁶ The validation process was based on an order from 5 June 1958, ‘Anordnung über die Ausstellung von Berufsausweisen für die Artistik und Kleinkunst’ (‘Order for the issuance of vocational certificates for circus performers and the minor arts’), that required all practicing performers to achieve at least a minimum quality in their performances; Weise, 1962:10. For figures see Netzker, 1959:1. From 1971, performers received an open-ended permit following audit; Bartsch et al., 1975:310.

⁴⁷ ‘sehr aufschlußreich’

⁴⁸ ‘Idee, Originalität, Schwierigkeitsgrad, Ausführung, Ausstattung, Musik bzw. Begleitmusik, Sprechtechnik, Gesangstechnik (Stimmführung)’

positioned socialist ideals above anything else. But, as Herrmann suggests, they were not sufficient in making sure that artistic labour was in fact socialist. Its rhetoric remained political. Herrmann's colleague Hans Obermann, director of the Leipzig cabaret Pfeffermühle, proudly stated that their profession had been 'pruned of amateurs and of culturally and politically inferior performances' (1959:2)⁴⁹. Technique was still subjugated to dramaturgical framings and political intentions.

In its historico-cultural context, the certification process was embedded in another national development that commenced during the Bitterfeld conference in 1959 and was thus called 'Bitterfelder Weg' ('Bitterfeld Path'). In order to further influence all aspects of life and cultural production, 'the government declared that all arts had to focus on the life of the working class' (Giersdorf, 2013:14). Artists were encouraged to participate in the working class's ways of living in order to experience the changing labour conditions, which they were then meant to portray. With regards to performers, it is important to note that everyone who thought of themselves as a circus performer was eligible for certification, because, 'the working class had to contribute to and participate in artistic production' (ibid). In his article, Herrmann acknowledged that 'the willingness of artistes to purge their profession was positive' (1959:4)⁵⁰ and that 'it created the preconditions for artistes to stand alongside other artists as their equals' (ibid)⁵¹. Politically, he confirmed that the Bitterfeld Weg in circus performance was the path that had been taken as the basis for future work. In the handbook for circus arts and cabaret, Heinrich Martens wrote in 1962 that 'through their labour, the circus performers of our republic represent the new, socialist Germany' (in Weise, 1962:9)⁵². The handstand metaphor was thus Herrmann's way to describe how socialist performance might be conceived of after artists had been validated.

2.2.1. The socialist handstand: Appropriating techniques of movement

By offering the idea of the socialist handstand, Herrmann started to rethink the narrative framings of circus performances and shifted the focus to the performing body itself. The quote works as what Joseph Roach

⁴⁹ 'Bereinigung des Berufes von Dilettanten und kulturpolitisch minderwertigen Leistungen'

⁵⁰ 'Die Bereitwilligkeit der Artisten aber, ihren Beruf als erste zu säubern, war positiv.'

⁵¹ 'die Voraussetzung dafür geschaffen, daß der Artist als gleichberechtigter Künstler neben dem anderen Künstler stehen darf.'

⁵² 'Die Artisten unserer Republik repräsentieren mit ihren Leistungen das neue, sozialistische Deutschland.'

called a ‘mnemonic reserve’ (Roach, 1996:26) as it reveals a number of issues that concerned artists at the time. It can be used to extract the past that is necessary to understand this particular appropriation of practice. In the typical contemporaneous rhetoric, Herrmann first denied, then further developed that which he had just rebuffed: ‘Of course there is no such thing as a socialist handstand.’ But by continuing that the ‘socialist’ descriptor should actually embody ‘humanist character,’ Herrmann lent his thinking cultural relevance. Being a theatre director himself, Herrmann expressed the need for a vocabulary that enabled him to move bodies in ways that would form a reproducible aesthetic rationale for socialist performance practice. His main concern was about how to continue and encourage the validated artists to engage in socialist aesthetic practice, now that they had secured their licence to perform.

In order to convey his idea of socialist movement practice, Herrmann mobilises markers of humanism, which become vehicles for a socialist aesthetic. Dance scholar Judith Hamera notes that a ‘metaphoric technology’ (2007:39) organizes the relationship between a moving body and its beholder. When words and concepts of thought begin to coordinate movement practices, it is through this conversational vocabulary that movement gains legibility beyond the moment of its ephemeral performance. She calls this link between doing and conversing ‘technique’ and describes it as the infrastructure that relates the community-forging practices of the rehearsal room to the aesthetics produced through conversation and practice. I use her approach in that I start with a conversation about the ephemeral moment in order to make assumptions about how practices were imagined and eventually formed. Technique in its conversational function ‘shapes its object-body, making it available for conversation, and actual reading’ (ibid:5). Although the socialist handstand had been a descriptive term, Herrmann tried to identify those qualities of the performing body that could potentially make it socialist by using humanist terminology to describe it: ‘but there are many crucial elements in an acrobatic number, for instance the beauty of the human body, bravery, and concentration.’ He employed these descriptions to create what Hamera refers to as a ‘synecdoche [of technique]’ (ibid): a network of tropes that form a complex rhetorical figure, and eventually enable specific aesthetics. Through this vocabulary, Herrmann allows for the artist’s movement to enter a discourse of socialist performance. In this context, metaphors and stories are the devices that animate the body and shape the ‘social lives of aesthetics’ (ibid:4). By shifting his focus to the body,

Herrmann opened the field to a discussion of socialist practice beyond the existing narrative and political concepts, like ‘bourgeois’ or ‘cosmopolitan’ as categories of Palast dramaturgy.

The socialist handstand, when read as a metaphor for technique—that is, for codes that will eventually ‘gover[n] and standardiz[e] dance practice’ (ibid:6)—gains an aesthetic dimension that is also rooted in a Marxist understanding of stage labour. In Marxist thought, when a body moves onstage, whether in dance, in acrobatics, or specialty acts, a performer’s movement is physical labour and her body is her means of production. The product of a handstand performer’s labour is the objectification of that labour. In other words, the handstand, as both labour and object, is consumed by onlookers while the performer labours it forth. In his idea of the handstand Herrmann stresses this state of affairs in his demand that the ‘crucial elements’ need to ‘shape taste,’ through the exhibition of the ‘beauty of the human body, bravery, and concentration’. Although these are primarily attributes of the performer, they are also meant to influence the beholder in her act of watching and to forge a community of onlookers. A socialist performance, in Herrmann’s eyes, is supposed to spark a conversation between the labouring and watching bodies. This relationship between the body labouring forth movements and the act of consuming this display is a conversation that Hamera describes as virtuosity: ‘labors that exceed any “self” expression of the artist’ (ibid:40). Reading the socialist handstand in this light suggests that its ‘crucial elements’ were to organize the body so as to provoke ‘interpersonal, vicarious, intimate conversations between artist and spectator/critic’ (ibid:39).

Finally, according to Herrmann, socialism had aesthetic implications that first and foremost had to be *vorwärtsweisend*, ‘pioneering.’ This notion gestured toward the future, evoking embodied manifestations of socialist realism’s dramatic function of prospective consciousness, which, writing about East German literature, Stephen Brockmann referred to as ‘an account of the forward-thrusting, dynamic historical movement from a problematic present to a better future’ (2015:57-58). On the one hand, this makes Herrmann’s handstand an invitation to explore what might be possible under the umbrella of humanist performance practice. On the other hand, it had very clear parameters set by notions of both humanism and socialist realism. This thinking precedes what Palast dramaturg Wolfgang Tilgner later called ‘the

imperative of progression' (Tilgner, 1968:5)⁵³ of cultural production. Shaping aesthetics towards the new, humanist horizon accompanied the GDR's self-conception during the 1960s. It is also this notion of physical performance as pioneering that lends the idea of a socialist handstand and the development in socialist performance that it triggered political relevance in shaping the country's future.

Conceptually, however, these notions of futurity were actually at stake because of a paradox arising from the pressures that socialist-realist production exerted on Marx's concept of alienated labour. In performance, a performer's means of production, her body, laboured forth the product (e.g., a handstand), which is her body's aestheticized movement and which is consumed by the onlooker. The paradox arose when the principles of socialist realism entered this conversation: her body, although it is her means of production, engendered the objectification of her labour, which is supposed to illustrate the future by means of humanism. This paradox required the audience to see her body and what she labours forth as two different things at the same time. Her means of production and the objectification of her labour were visually the same; but socialist virtuosity was meant to illustrate this distinction by way of specific narrative references that originate in an ideological reading of performance, i.e. a critique of the current condition and a way out, all delivered by means of humanist performance.

2.2.2. Scripted affects and the classical-technical vortex

Socialist movement practice and the aesthetic relations it produced put at stake conventional notions of what virtuosity entails. When Judith Hamera writes about virtuosity, she mobilises 'monsters'—that is, something that may seem impossible to achieve—to construe virtuosic excesses as forms of 'demonstration', or a showing of visible evidence. In her description, virtuosity is the 'affective excess of projective, vicarious relations' (2007:42) and thus a form of embodied excess. In Marxist physical practice, however, these monsters were tamed and the labour, which was produced under humanist conditions, was meant to be displayed as evidencing a positive achievement that was executable with ease. Audiences were compelled to see humanism—that is, a representation of both the country's future and its means of getting there—as an inspiring and easily achievable task.

⁵³ 'Bewegungsgesetzlichkeit'

In their *Artistik* special issue *Die Zirkuskunst in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik* ('The Circus Arts in the German Democratic Republic') of 1964, Heinz Lauckner and Mario Turra emphasize conversations in which humanist fiction was used to forge commitment to the socialist idea: 'We are not thinking about sensations based on thrills in which the human takes a backseat. But we need acts that are implemented in a way that audiences talk about them and are eventually drawn to attend' (1964:6)⁵⁴. By delineating socialist performance from spectacles based on thrills, they seem to refuse conventional ideas of virtuosity, like 'heroism, mastery, talent' (Hamera, 2007:40), in order to replace them with socialist scripts:

To arouse *pride in the human performance capabilities* through high-quality circus performance. To inspire people *to achieve high performances themselves* through displaying top-class circus presentations. To allow audiences to make an *aesthetic evaluation of that which is beautiful* through the spectacle of fine bodies in accomplished movements. (...) To arouse pride in the distinguished accomplishments of the circus of the GDR through splendidly executed circus performances. (Lauckner and Turra, 1964:12; italics in original.)⁵⁵

According to Lauckner and Turra, scripts that entailed bodily exhaustion—and thus by conventional understanding the demonstration of bodily excess—had to be replaced by movement vocabularies of 'terpsichorean grace and control' (Lauckner & Turra, 1964:7)⁵⁶. These scripted affects were to promote positive efforts, like 'bravery, power, athleticism, affirmation of life' (Lauckner, 1960:8)⁵⁷ but only if 'outstanding performances are mastered with ease, charm, and elegance' (ibid). Such performances were to tease out a 'liberating laughter' (ibid)⁵⁸, suggesting that the humanist elements, understood as labour, are presented in a kind of aesthetic alliance with the thrills and the sensations of conventional performance. In Heinz Lauckner's analysis, socialist virtuosity emerged as a split between excellent body control and its humanist positive framing. '[P]erformers...can perform through their art and exemplary appearance, a vital

⁵⁴ 'Dabei denken wir nicht an die Sensation mit Nervenkitzel, bei denen der Mensch in den Hintergrund tritt. Aber wir könnten Darbietungen brauchen, die als Zugnummer im Programm so eingesetzt werden, daß von ihnen das Publikum spricht, oder die das Publikum allein schon in den Zirkus locken.'

⁵⁵ 'Durch die Darbietung hoher artistischer oder Dressurleistungen den *Stolz über das menschliche Leistungsvermögen*. Durch die Zurschaustellung von Spitzenleistungen der Zirkensik den *Wunsch selbst hohe Leistungen zu vollbringen*. Durch den Anblick schöner Körper in vollendeten Bewegungen *eine höhere ästhetische Wertungen dessen, was schön ist*. (...) Durch ein glanzvoll dargebotenes Zirkusprogramm den Stolz, daß es ein Zirkus der DDR ist, der solch' hohe Leistung zu präsentieren im Stande ist, zu wecken.'

⁵⁶ 'tänzerische Eleganz und Sicherheit'

⁵⁷ 'Mut, Kraft, Sport, Lebensbejahung'

⁵⁸ 'wenn das Lachen befreiend ist'

socialist function,’ (1960:8)⁵⁹ he continued, alluding to humanism’s capacity to create that perceptible gap between the body as the artist’s means of production and the objectification of her labour. These affects were eventually intended to create a longing for the socialist sense of life. However, this longing could only be realized if the ‘fine bodies in accomplished movements’ (Lauckner and Turra, 1964:12)⁶⁰ brought them to life.

In order for the audience to see the body’s labour as different from its objectification, the body’s techniques also had to receive a socialist makeover. Considering the volume of words devoted by *Artistik* contributors to delineating primarily bourgeois forms of sensationalist performance from a still to be defined socialist kind, any technique ought to avoid the reproduction of what Vicky Lebeau called ‘pre-existing patterns of fascination’ (1991:256) associated with conventional bourgeois forms of virtuosity. These capitalist vestiges of circus performance aesthetics were to be transformed into something else because, in a socialist society, they had lost their meaning. This thinking was eventually carried through to the end of the GDR.

The language of class warfare structured this shift from conventional to socialist labour. In the discursive practice of the entertaining arts industry, the revue bodies were used to imagine a cultural superiority to Western forms of virtuosity—first in writing, then in practice-related interventions. According to East German ideologists, the exemplary appearance engendered by humanist interventions was lacking in the plots of Western virtuosity, which was primarily critiqued as being sensationalist. In a 1965 article entitled ‘Pure or poor sensation, or What’s the value of a human being?’⁶¹, an unnamed critic described the two ways in which an artist’s performance can be overlaid by sensationalism. In his first example, he renounces ‘apparent danger to life’ (n.a., 1965:6)⁶², such as a fictitious fall from great heights in which the artist was in fact protected by a safety bond. The plotted fall was the conclusion of an artistic presentation. The sensationalism was in the act’s false promise, that of falling seemingly without protection. Such a

⁵⁹ ‘Artist (...) können mit ihrer Kunst durch die Art ihres vorbildlichen Auftretens eine wesentliche Aufgabe im Sozialismus erfüllen’

⁶⁰ ‘schöner Körper in vollendeten Bewegungen’

⁶¹ ‘Echte oder schlechte Sensation, oder Was ist der Mensch wert?’

⁶² ‘scheinbare Lebensgefahr’

deliberate and in his eyes plotted diversion was pure sensation. According to the author, it corrupts the onlooker's concentration to a degree in which 'the real humanistic achievement dissolves into the depressing feelings of bourgeois decadence' (ibid:6)⁶³. Finally, he takes issues with deliberate mortal dangers designed to render sensational tendencies, e.g. a trapeze act without safety net: 'What is a man's worth in such a society if he is allowed to throw away his life for a performance?' (ibid:7)⁶⁴ In his argument, the latter example stood in for all that was wrong in western forms of circus performance. According to him, it exposed the inert anti-humanitarianism of capitalism. Ten years later, the 1975 dictionary of entertainment arts still listed *Sensationsartistik* ('sensational circus performance') as a symptom of capitalist decay, but stated that even in 'socialism such forms of circus performance have a right to exist if the technical and health and safety requirements are met accordingly' (Bartsch et al., 1975:253)⁶⁵. But in 1965, when humanism was booming as a cultural narrative, the GDR was thought to 'have jettisoned the word *sensation* along with its bourgeois-decadent content' (n.n., 1965:5; italics in original)⁶⁶.

These discussions were results of the search for what Herrmann called the 'uniform line in the art of amusement', that is, a form that standardized movement practice and appropriated bodily knowledge from the past. Waltraud Kropp and Heinz Schröter offer such homogenising aesthetic strategies for East German variety practice in another *Artistik* special issue, *Die Bedeutung der Tanzkunst für die artistische Arbeit* ('The Importance of Terpsichorean Art for Variety Labour'). They propose to apply a particular manifestation of performance reconstruction that aims at reimagining variety practice vocabularies in terms of classical dance and by doing so attempt to alter circus practice's genealogies by applying a new standard. Joseph Roach described this mode of reconstruction as 'vortices of behaviour' (Roach, 1996:27-28), that is, both a mixing and a return of practices to create a new type. According to Roach, '[t]heir function is to canalize specific needs, desires, and habits in order to reproduce them' (ibid). Kropp and Schröter outlined in their treatise the need for an appropriation technique that would make any performance convey a yet-to-be-defined uniform line of socialist entertainment. Technique became a means of communicating the

⁶³ 'die echte humanistische Leistung der Artisten aufgelöst in depressive Gefühle der bürgerlichen Dekadenz'

⁶⁴ 'Was ist der Mensch in jener Gesellschaft wert, wenn er sein Leben für eine Vorstellung wegwerfen darf?'

⁶⁵ 'Bei entsprechender techn. Sicherung der genutzten Apparate u. Schutzmaßnahmen für den Artisten hat die S. in geeigneten Darbietungen auch in der soz. Gesellschaftsordnung eine gewisse Existenzberechtigung.'

⁶⁶ 'Wir haben bei uns in den vergangenen Jahren das Wort *Sensation* samt seinem bürgerlichen-dekadenten Inhalt über Bord geworfen'

humanist markers that Herrmann had called for. Synthesising Kropp and Schröter's method with Roach's theory, I will call this method of appropriating movement protocols with the help of classical dance technique, the 'classical-technical vortex'. Kropp and Schröter begin from their perception that training in circus performance lacks engagement of an all-around body. This perception, like the idea of the non-competitive handstand itself, clearly draws on existing notions of a German physical culture. According to them, dance benefits from an 'all-around development of musculature, jumping and lifting powers, steadfastness, back tension, expressive arm movements, technique of turns, harmonic movements and postures' (1964:4)⁶⁷. The routines of ballet's classical exercise would then provide a coherent 'system of scenic movement' (Tarassow, 1974:12) for circus performers.

This idea gains even greater significance if the position of the classical exercise of Russian style is considered in relation to other schools of ballet. Working within the same ideological framework, Russian dance pedagogue Nikolai I. Tarassow argues that the Russian school, in a highly academic fashion, combined the French tradition, which 'is characterized by rich compositional techniques, an elegant manner, and soft movements' (1974:15), with the Italian tradition, which stands for a 'virtuosic technique and a strict style' (ibid). The perceived stylistic totality of the Russian-style classical exercise further fertilized Kropp and Schröter's ambition of combining it with circus techniques to shape aestheticized labour onstage, because it would support the 'fostering of creative expressiveness' (Kropp and Schröter, 1964:6)⁶⁸. It needs to be emphasised that the classical technique was not meant to push the body to extremes, but to foster the kind of academic expressiveness that the Russian technique promised in order to protect the body's narrative quality. They emphasised that

One must not understand movements and poses as mere formal elements, but must realise that they are already carrying narrative quality. (...) The three basic arm positions and the six port de bras together with its variations must not be taught as units detached from a holistic body training. (ibid:8)⁶⁹

⁶⁷ 'Für die Entwicklung der Muskulatur, der Sprung- und Hebekraft, der Standfestigkeit, der Rückenspannung, der ausdrucksvollen Armbewegungen, der Technik der Drehungen, der harmonischen Körperbewegung und -haltung'

⁶⁸ 'Entwicklung der künstlerischen Ausdruckskraft'

⁶⁹ 'Man darf Bewegungen und Posen nicht als bloße Formelemente auffassen, sondern muß erkennen, daß sie der Träger von inhaltlichen Aussagen sind (...) Die drei Armpositionen und -formen oder die sechs port de bras mit ihren Variationen dürfen nicht losgelöst vom gesamten Körpertraining gelehrt werden.'

But such a consistent *Körperschule* ('school of the body') that imparted narrative meaning was lacking in all disciplines of circus practice training. Connecting to the discourse that led to the establishment of the national circus school in 1956, Kropp and Schröter perceived the circus practice of past epochs as 'isolatedly drilled, individualistic sensational presentation that quite often compromised the performers' well-being and life' (ibid:4)⁷⁰. Classical training was meant to infuse humanist circus practice in the GDR.

On the one hand, dance techniques were meant to change an act's compositional structure by means of choreography, blurring the boundaries between their actual objects and their framing. On the other, they were to eliminate capitalist vestiges by eradicating meaningless effigies: techniques such as 'giving way for the knee...spread fingers...put-on clichéd smile' (ibid:7)⁷¹ were considered dilettante, and by extension of the rhetoric of class warfare, conventional, pre-socialist, and thus capitalist. According to Kropp and Schröter, a holistic body training puts movement back into 'a logical relation' (ibid:8)⁷² with the body if it was applied 'constructively' (ibid:8)⁷³, that is, if it channelled the scripted plots of humanist performance described earlier. In a description of a performance that is not further identified, Kropp and Schröter describe such improved movements:

In their arms lies genuine grace and their presentation exudes a cultivated style. The conduct of the arms is soft and relaxed, the affectation and constraint of expression have been dropped. The performer has an immediate relationship to every movement, he fully supports and occupies it. The poses were expressive and inspirited (ibid).⁷⁴

Many of the theoretical reflections that can be found in the archive of the *Artistik* magazine describe how socialist performance practice might have been shifted towards a humanist and socialist horizon. Socialist virtuosity was thus a technology that mobilised dance labour to convey and extend the plots of circus performance as an experience of something extraordinary that was still rooted in the body and its own technologies. Dance technique, according to the authors, extended the act's proposition of meaning,

⁷⁰ 'die isoliert gedrillte, individualistische, nicht selten Gesundheit der Leben der Artisten aufs Spiel setzende, sensationale Darbietung'

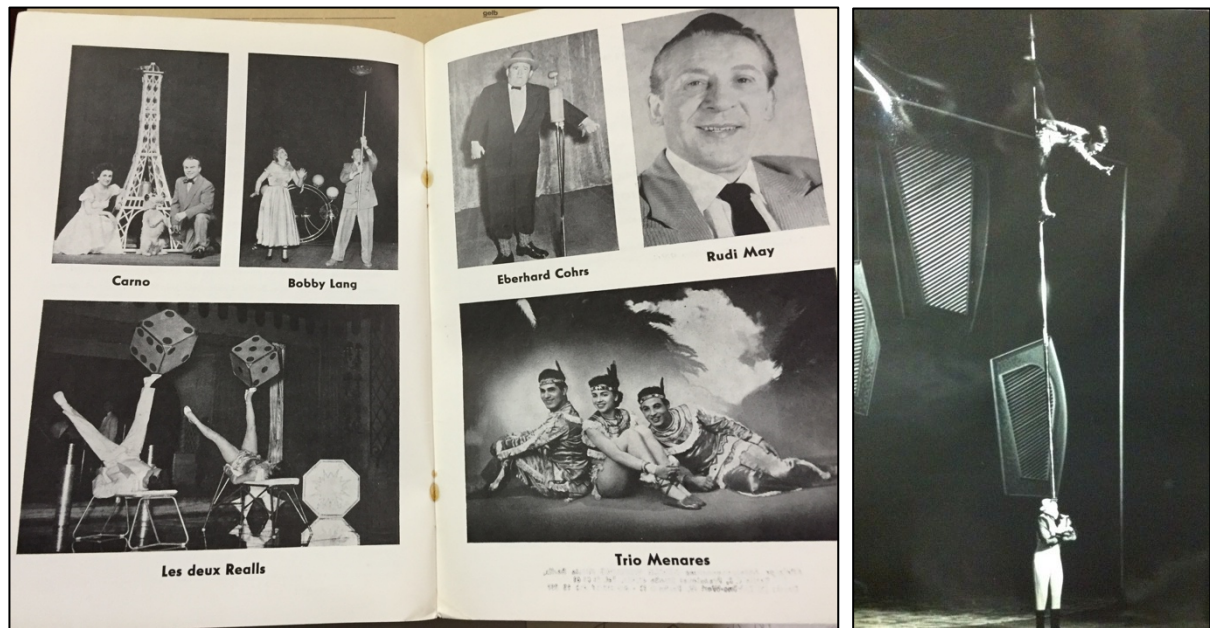
⁷¹ 'leicht angewinkeltem Knie (...) gespreizter Fingerstellung (...) ein aufgesetztes Klischeelächeln'

⁷² 'logischen Zusammenhang'

⁷³ 'schöpferisch'

⁷⁴ 'In ihren Bewegungen liegt echte Grazie und ihre Darbietungen zeichnen sich durch einen kultivierten Stil aus. Die Armführung ist locker und gelöst, die Gespreiztheit und Geziertheit im Ausdruck entfallen. Der Artist hat eine unmittelbare Beziehung zu jeder Bewegung, er steht hinter ihr und füllt sie aus. Die Posen werden ausdrucksvoll, beseelt'

because ‘an isolated trick without any “packaging” does not affect the audience. Even the most virtuosic trick does not suffice for an artistic display’ (ibid:10)⁷⁵. Using dance was meant to help in transposing an act that might have been conceptualised for the circus ring onto a proscenium stage. The classical-technical vortex thus conceptualised the body and aimed at aestheticising the speciality act’s presentation, facilitating a conversation between the act and the stage, and the bodies on and off stage.



IMAGES 2.12-13. International Palast casting. 2.12 Cast sheet of *Bunte Palast-Palette* (1957) in the programme booklet. 2.13 The Schubert twin’s pole act in *Palast Mosaik* (1967).

The remaining part of this chapter is about how socialist virtuosity manifested in the Friedrichstadt-Palast’s programming and how it influenced its operations. The intellectual efforts to rethink socialist performance were accompanied by the discontinuation of free movement across the border to West Germany in 1961, which led to a greater share of East German performers in Palast shows. While in the 1950s, the greater part of the Palast’s programmes were dominated by circus artists from outside the GDR who had been trained in non-socialist ways, the share inverted during the 1960s. Two years before Herrmann coined the socialist handstand, his show *Bunte Palast-Palette* (‘Colourful Palast Palette’, April 1957), for example, was an eclectic mix of European circus performers. A Risley act was presented by Les Deux Realls from France, Carno was an acrobat from West Germany, the Bonny Sisters from Denmark performed another antipode act, Trio Menares were acrobats from Morocco, and Prof. Olgo from England

⁷⁵ ‘ein isoliert gezeigter Trick ohne “Verpackung” noch keine Wirkung auf das Publikum hat. Selbst der virtuoseste Trick macht allein noch keine künstlerische Darbietung aus.’

exercised his high-speed maths skills (image 2.12). Ten years later, *Palast Mosaik* ('Palast Mosaic', February 1967), for example, was a show of similar character, but had a much greater share of East German acts. East German acts included a skating act by Die Alpezos, a hanging pole act by the Schubert twins (image 2.13), a teeterboard act by Die Köhlers, a mouth pole act by 2 Panduras, and musical clown act by Die Jacos. International acts comprised a trampoline act by Les Coronas from Austria and an impersonation act by Ezio Bedin from Italy. Spread out over the same year, the Palast employed a total of 158 guest performers, 112 of which were from the GDR, 18 from socialist, another 28 from non-socialist countries; amongst the total number were 33 circus performers from the GDR, another eight from other socialist countries (Friedrichstadt-Palast, 1968a:2).

In order to evaluate the usefulness of a socialist movement practice, it might be worthwhile to also think about the practicability of a method like the classical-technical vortex to facilitate notions of socialist virtuosity in the ways it had been proposed by the writers discussed above. Despite the fact that circus practices are multiform and each practice in fact requires unique training methods, the classical-technical vortex aspired to create a method that subsumed circus practices under the framing techniques of ballet. Its classical exercise would indeed lead to a holistically trained body, but it would also train musculature in ways that could obstruct the development of particular techniques for specific circus acts. For example, an aerialist would need upper body strength, particularly in her back and in her arms, to maintain control over the centrifugal force while gaining momentum on the straps. Light legs and a strong core are important to working with and sometimes even against the centrifugal force. Ballet training, which primarily strengthens the legs and the buttocks, would counter such movements and require the aerialist to further strengthen her arms and back. It is questionable, though, whether a classical-technical vortex in aerial performance would actually result in an all-round body when, practically, a more targeted training would be more beneficial.⁷⁶ In the GDR, the production of aestheticized labour was brought into accord with its consumption and required, obviously against the grain of any particular practice, a homogeneity in which the productive labour of movement was covered by a scripted affect based on elegance and pride, evoking readings of effortless

⁷⁶ I am indebted to Dr Kate Holmes, a trained aerialist and circus historian, for providing this particular example.

labour—if, as the example above has shown, training considered the peculiarities of particular practices and choreographies were able to cover up eventual shortcomings.

Even though socialist virtuosity concerns the performing body, its very movements, and how these movements were read, the most significant impacts of the concept can be demonstrated when we look at how it transformed the institution and its daily operations. The growing confidence in the socialist body can be attributed to the development of socialist virtuosity, thus allowing for the bodies of the revue to make sense over and above narrative content and the folk aesthetics of the 1950s. The turn toward dance-centred revues starting in the mid-1960s required that the body be recognized as a bearer of meaning in its own right. In the light of the development of a socialist virtuosity, the power of the moving body to create meaning beyond narrative in variety theatre prefigured the Palast's development into a terpsichorean revue theatre in the 1960s. These long-term developments are proof that socialist movement practice in fact restructured the daily efforts of the performers and dancers at the Friedrichstadt-Palast and—in anticipating the end of this chapter—it was also the fault of socialist virtuosity and its rigorous application that the socialist revue lost its popularity with critics just before the theatre closed in 1980. The next section analyses the dancing revue bodies as bearing the consequences of the uniform line of socialist virtuosity.

2.3. Dance practice and the uniform line of socialist virtuosity

The moving bodies and their socialist aestheticisation at the Friedrichstadt-Palast during the 1960s and 1970s continued to be shaped by the kinaesthetic re-imagination of technique against a humanist horizon and the classical-technical vortex. In line with the imperative of progression, the Palast turned away from variety programmes and towards dance-centred revues during the 1960s, which it regarded as the re-theatricalisation of variety practice. This shift is well documented in the institutional archive and in books that chronicle the Palast's development during those years.⁷⁷ However, these accounts forgot to assess these developments in the light of the interventions in practice described above. The intellectual debates about socialist performance practice continued to influence revue practice at the Friedrichstadt-Palast well into the late 1970s. In fact, it provided the discursive and practice-related groundwork from which the Palast

⁷⁷ For the development from variety to revue theatre, see Carlé, 1987:133-145, Schumann, 1995:56-61.

imagined its futures, while being increasingly isolated and becoming uniform in its revue aestheticisations. In order to account for this development in its historico-cultural context, this section is about the aftermath of what Herrmann's idea engendered, when the 'handstand' was replaced by other movement practices, but continued to function in the same way. It extends and challenges the chronicles so far available by understanding the socialist revue extravaganza on its own, increasingly faltering terms. The chapter ends with the closing of the old Friedrichstadt-Palast in 1980. While the next chapter examines the reasons for this closure from the point of view of the physical condition of the theatre building itself, the remainder of this chapter argues that the techniques of performance appropriation in fact put at stake the artistic value of the socialist revue and thus its futurity. What had been regarded as a novel way of thinking about moving bodies in the 1950s, became the epitome of what Birgit Walter in 2004 compared to 'canteen food'—highly repetitive and comparatively uninventive socialist revue practice.

Historically, this artistic development was framed by several political changes. Additionally to the building of the Berlin Wall to stop free movement across the border to and from western non-socialist countries, the change in leadership of the GDR from Walter Ulbricht to Erich Honecker in 1971 discontinued the fairly rectilinear development of humanist attitudes and instead rendered rigid the thinking so far developed. Although the accession of Honecker is widely associated with a limited relaxation in cultural policy and space for a more pluralist aesthetic, the cultural work on a humanist discourse began to slacken (Groschopp, 2013:25). The Friedrichstadt-Palast, however, had just based its creative operations in a humanist discourse. The reason Herrmann's idea about socialist movement practice still resonated in the 1970s is rooted in what is discussed as socialist modernity. Scholars who have reflected on the GDR's history of theatre and dance have noted that the 1970s have been considered a turning point for when East German theatre became more 'playful and abstract' (Stuber, 2000:9)⁷⁸ with its means gaining a certain autonomy over text and literal meaning making. Jens Giersdorf has further specified that the GDR had until its end been caught in an ongoing contradiction 'in which dance, movement, and choreography was never emancipated from narrative and message' (2013:22), but nevertheless increasingly embarked on '[a]n investigation of artistic form as content' (ibid:41). In the Palast, where dance was seen as a part of socialist

⁷⁸ See also Giersdorf, 2013:50,66–84.

entertainment, it still had to fold into the socialist teleology of the nation's cultural development. The aforementioned discussions about narrative, dance as text, and even the debates about the socialist handstand itself, are embedded in the GDR's socialist modernity.

The discourse about a socialist movement practice is the means through which socialist modernity at the Palast had been understood, and this is a connection that so far has not been made by scholars. A periodisation of the Palast's revue practice in its old theatre building at Am Zirkus 1 should thus follow the development of its humanistic practice. The dramaturgical turn towards abstract revues between the late 1960s and early 1970s that predominantly became associated with the political change after Erich Honecker came to power does not feel like a sudden change, but a gradual development that could only have happened precisely because the protagonists of revue and variety theatre learned how to fathom the moving body's physical labour in the terms of socialist-humanist arts practice—a conversation that Herrmann started in 1959 by denying that it existed.

2.3.1. The 1960s: Rejecting variety, reconfiguring dance

While the appropriation of circus bodies was well underway during the 1960s (as described above), the appropriation of the Palast's dancing bodies had far greater ramifications for the Palast's creative practice. In terms of dance's socialist appropriation, the sixties channelled the humanist practices from circus performance towards the appropriation of dance that now happened within the changed daily realities that followed the discontinuation of free movement in 1961. The *Artistik* magazine now increasingly published pieces that were about performing peace instead of re-instating a negatively connoted class war. Artistically, matters seemed to have become more vernacular, almost provincial.⁷⁹ The GDR's cultural sovereignty was

⁷⁹ In the editorial of the September 1961 issue, one month after the construction of the border installations started, Horst Gaap, head of the section 'entertaining arts' of the department of performing arts at the arts union (Heidschmidt, 2004:[online]), channelled the official East German rationale for the erection of the physical border in requesting loyalty to the idea of a better life: 'Like any other worker in the GDR, the artist co-determines her labour and living conditions by standing in for the preservation of peace (Wie jeder andere Werktätige in der DDR bestimmt der Künstler seine Arbeits- und Lebensbedingungen mit, vor allem auch, indem er für die Erhaltung des Friedens eintritt)' (1961:1). This view was justified by the apprehension that 'the socialist countries are dominating world politics today' (ibid). The remaining articles stuck to mundane practice-related matters, like Heinrich Marten's 'Room temperatures on the stage and in the artists' wardrobes (Raumtemperaturen für Bühne und Künstlergarderoben)'

channelled in an increasing pressure for the East Germans to ultimately prove their cultural productions' relevance by emphasising vernacular approaches towards variety and revue culture. After the division of Germany was literally cemented, the GDR's former pursuit for a reunification under socialist rule were shelved and the country aimed at being recognised as a sovereign state. The revue bodies were used to imagine this cultural sovereignty and superiority—first in writing, then in practice-related interventions.

The 1960s saw the emergence of annual repertoire proposals⁸⁰ to outline the institution's planned artistic development and programming intentions for the following year. On the one hand, the *Spielplan* was a device of bureaucratic control that allowed for coherent micro-management of the theatre's creative output. On the other hand, because it was written, it forced the Palast's creative lead to also think about how its creative choices would need to be embedded in the artistic doctrine and consequentially expressed in practice. In relation to this thesis, these repertoire proposals helped me to reconstruct the creative development of the Palast during those years and have further animated the available images, because the *Spielplan* embedded the productions in the culture policies of their time, of which the articles in the *Artistik* were a good indicator.

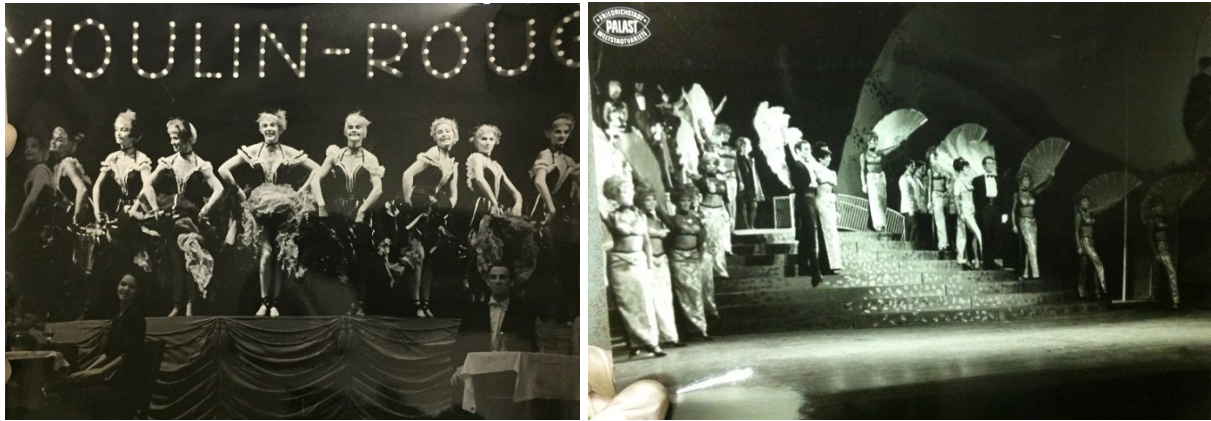
The classical-technical vortex as an all-around tool to shape the moving body's aesthetic dominated the Palast's movement practice during the 1960s and 1970s. From an ideological point of view, classical dance technique continued to facilitate a socialist sense of life by exhibiting what was perceived as beautiful and noble acts of both grace and bodily control. *Unterhaltungskunst A-Z* underlines this understanding of dance as 'a means for the human being to pervade and understand social life, and the thoughts and feelings of the individual through a variety of combined movements' (Bartsch et al., 1975:273)⁸¹. When ballet was employed in a revue, 'the focus is not on ballet's narrative function, but on the virtuosic, artistically perfect execution of exhibition dances—of groups or solo dances—emphasising the terpsichorean beauty'

(Martens, 1961:14). In the October editorial, Günter Heß, member of the *Deutscher Friedensrat* ('German Peace Council'), reacted to the events of the 13 August by stating that peace can only be achieved if 'active doing asserts it' (Heß, 1961:1), thus repeating the party rationale of the wall as being an antifascist rampart. This potential for change through action he transfers to the circus performers of the country.

⁸⁰ *Spielplan*

⁸¹ 'ein Mittel des Menschen, die Natur, das Leben in der Gesellschaft sowie die Gedanken u. Gefühle des Individuums durch eine Vielzahl einzelner u. kombinierter Körperbewegungen zu durchdringen u. zu erfassen.'

(ibid:28)⁸². Thus, the efficacy of bodily labour was understood through the technique it employed to fathom socialist life. From a practice point of view, the appropriation of dance allowed choreographers to create dances and spatial choreographies for what was one of Berlin's largest stages. These dances could be based on known movement vocabulary, but be extended to fill the whole stage.



IMAGES 2.14-15. Revue dance in the Palast. 2.14 Cancan in *Bonsoir, Paris* (October/November 1958). **2.15** Singers framed by revue dancers in *Kess und verliebt* (March/April 1971).

Surveying the archive of Palast revues during the 1960s and 1970s, three functions of revue dance stand out that evidence the revue dance's increasing emancipation from narrative. They could still have a narrative function, or frame a singer in a leader-group relationship, or exist as mere exhibition dances. The socialist significance was rendered quite differently in each. Narrative dances became important to socialist world-making, because they illustrated the circumstances and milieus of the framing narrative and thus supported an overarching socialist tale. The revue *Bonsoir, Paris* (1958, image 2.14), for example, staged a Cancan in an authentic Parisian setting, underneath the illuminated letters of the Moulin Rouge. Dance was bound to a depiction of its dramatic locale, leading a second-order existence of signification. The second group of dances usually framed lyrics sung by a singer, who was also advertised and thus carried a certain socialist reputation. Although the focus remained on the star and his or her literal meaning-making, the dancers framed the song's presentation visually and by filling space, rather than performing literally the meaning of the lyrics. In *Kess und verliebt* ('Cheeky and in love', March/April 1971; image 2.15), the typical spatial framing of the revue's singers in revue-esque form still needed the singers in the middle in order to

⁸² 'Bei letzterem [Revue- und Varietétanz] liegt dabei der Schwerpunkt weniger auf einer Handlungsfunktion als auf dem virtuoson, artistisch perfektionierten Schautanz – in Gruppen oder solo –, der den Effekt der tänzer. Schönheit (...) in den Vordergrund stellt.'

function. The fans, the v-shaped blocking, and even a moderate amount of bare skin signify that this is indeed a revue.

The remainder of this chapter will not exclude these two groups, but focus more on the last group, the exhibition dances, and how they became socialist. By the end of the 1970s, exhibition dances took up the greater share of a show, which is evidence for how explorations into form superseded the generation of new contents and became an artistic strategy in socialist modernity and towards understanding dance as ‘aesthetic-artistic entity or product that is consciously created for its reception’ (Gommlich, 1989:8)⁸³ by the late 1980s. In this cause, the vocabularies of various dance styles and folk repertoires were appropriated through the classical-technical vortex and were thus meant to extend socialist notions beyond narrative. Choreography, as mentioned above, was meant to express ‘the terpsichorean beauty’ as a marker of the socialist body. By having defined beauty as a property of socialist movement practice, Herrmann’s handstand metaphor remains the key to understanding the development of the humanist-socialist dancing body in the 1960s.

Towards the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, the Palast embraced dramaturgical structures of revue that lacked a causal and even spoken narrative. Shows like *R wie Revue* (‘R as in Revue’) (1972), or *Ouvertüre mit 6* (‘Overture with 6’, 1975), exemplify how this relatively new form of genre fable illustrated an idea with the means of revue and exhibition dances (see chapter 1). The image archive of *Ouvertüre mit 6*, for example, shows in the boldest manner forms of revue-esque distribution of bodies on stage and in scenery (image 2.16). As in the classical revue, the moments of apotheosis were saved for the show’s finale. During the show, dances increasingly ceased to transport literary meaning. For example, a photo that was named ‘Tango’ shows revue girls adorned with feathers dancing on the edge of the stage in movements that rather look like the battements of a girl dance (image 2.18). Revue girls are portrayed with feathered headdresses, allowing for nuanced arm movement that seems to be part of a complementary dance vocabulary. The dance’s revue-esque form emancipated from a framing function to actually carrying a whole scene. Although this is a deliberate example, it attests a general shift in the emancipation of the dancing body from its interpretative stage context, whether it be other (mostly singing) bodies, or set pieces

⁸³ ‘der als ästhetisch-künstlerisches Gebilde bzw. Produkt bewußt für die Rezeption geschaffen wird’

attributable to a specific place or time. The show lacked a narrative, but amongst imaginations of Russian folklore (image 2.17) were non-narrativised renditions of small and large-scale revue dances, relying on the optical effect of dance as show dance and its self-narrating assortment of spatial distribution of bodies.



IMAGES 2.16-18. Ouvertüre mit 6 (May 1975). 2.16 Revue tableau during the show's finale. 2.17. Russian folk. 2.18. Showdance (image found in folder: 'Tango').

When surveying the image archive of the 1960s and 1970s, the classical-technical vortex is increasingly visible and thus suggests that the theoretical interventions of the mid-1960s were accepted and developed by practitioners. The theoretical groundwork was laid by Waltraud Kropp in *Der Revuetanz und*

seine Perspektive ('Revue dance and its perspective'), another special edition of the *Artistik* magazine of 1964. In it, she examined classical revue dances (e.g. Cancan, nude dances, girl dance, aestheticized folk dance) in terms of what else they reconstructed besides a technical vocabulary and suggested altering the technical protocols of revue dance towards a humanist horizon. According to Kropp, the classical-technical vortex would help remedy outdated palimpsests, like the unnecessary sentimentalism of gaiting revue beauties in feathers—despite the fact that they never disappeared from the Palast's stages. As the supplement's title already suggests, Kropp proposed the classical-technical vortex as the only perspective for all the examined revue dances. Her approach to making dance viable for the socialist present is also a discussion about the ideological weight of the past exhibited in these traditional dance forms. She makes clear that 'the perspective of revue dance is not a question of regarding dances as isolated forms, but a problem that can only be solved in relation to the terpsichorean substance' (ibid:20)⁸⁴. She alludes to the aestheticisation of a dance form's technical vocabulary. 'This aestheticisation, according to her, 'is a question of ideology' (ibid)⁸⁵, thus a question of humanism and by extension classical training. If, according to Kropp, in a revue extravaganza of the bourgeoisie, dance was able to conjure forth the basic intellectual attitude of any tableau on display (be it a danced sculpture or a kitschy Hawaiian tableau), the socialist aestheticisation should have the capacity to interfere in the transfer of those attitudes into the socialist revue.

Kropp's most poignant example is her analysis of the traditional revue dance of Cancan, revealing where the technique became exploited by the bourgeois agenda. According to Kropp, the once comprehensive step material of the Cancan—originally a form of quadrille that embodied a counter-dance symbolising the victorious war of the people against the monarchy and aristocracy in 1860 Paris—was increasingly focussed on 'indecent movements' (ibid:8)⁸⁶ by the 1880s. She underlines that 'choreography was abbreviated to mere "exhibition dance" ... Through alluding to the dancers' sex appeal, the Cancan became more vulgar and became eventually lost in the common' (ibid)⁸⁷, with even the costumes having

⁸⁴ 'Die Perspektive des Revuetanzes ist keine Frage von isoliert zu betrachtenden tänzerischen Formen, sondern ist ein Problem, das nur im Zusammenhang mit dem tänzerischen Inhalt gelöst werden kann;...'

⁸⁵ '... es ist eine Frage der Ideologie.'

⁸⁶ 'unsittlichen Bewegungen'

⁸⁷ 'Die Choreographie war auf "Schantanz" zugeschnitten. (...) Ganz bewusst kam es mehr und mehr auf das Ausspielen sexueller Reize an (...) So wurde der Ton des Cancan nach 1900 immer ordinärer und verlor sich im Gemeinen.'

become standardised. She concludes, '[w]hen tableaux only serve the rendition of costume and body show, dance is nothing of the sort' (ibid:10)⁸⁸. She argues for a de-brutalisation (cf. ibid:13) of the partner relations and a thorough excavation of the historic dance material so that it can be infused with humanist qualities. By defining in writing a combined practice of traditional revue dance and classical training, she assumes mass body virtuosity to only create that affective bond with the beholder when freed from both its kitsch and signs of the practices' deterioration: 'Kitsch, cliché and "scam" can only be overcome on the basis of serious work, even if this entails inconveniences' (ibid:15)⁸⁹, such as classical ballet training: 'Based on the ideas of a socialist humanism, based on the ideas of the new conception of man, these terpsichorean gaffes can be ruled out' (ibid:20)⁹⁰. According to Kropp, the classical-technical vortex re-maps the revue body and creates a new ideal version that is ultimately supposed to explicate the socialist sense of life. This entailed that revue dance had to drop any clichéd step material, like the '*verkitschte Varietéanzärme*' ('sentimentalized arm movement of variety dance') (ibid:15). Although Kropp took issue with such clichéd step material in 1964, it actually became increasingly visible in photographs of typical revue tableaux during the 1970s, like in the tango tableau in *Ouvertüre mit 6*, for reasons to be examined below.

While during the 1960s, the discursive groundwork for the appropriation of dance's technical protocols was established, the Palast itself set its sights on re-theatricalising its programmes by becoming a revue theatre whose focus was on terpsichorean programmes. In 1963, Palast director Wolfgang E. Struck expressed his intentions in the *Berliner Zeitung*:

Good, humanist traditions are to be acquired and further developed with our means so that we disseminate beauty from our stages. Circus performance alone, no matter how skilful, cannot achieve that anymore. Thus, the show, the revue extravaganza has gained centre stage (Struck in Frank, 1963:6).⁹¹

⁸⁸ 'Innerhalb dieser typischen Revue-Bilder, die lediglich als Anlaß zur Kostüm- und Körpershow dienten, kann von Tanz nicht mehr die Rede sein.'

⁸⁹ 'Kitsch, Klischee und "Masche" können nur auf der Basis ernsthafter Arbeit, auch wenn sie Unbequemlichkeiten mit sich bringt, überwunden werden.'

⁹⁰ 'Ausgehend von der Idee des sozialistischen Humanismus, ausgehend von den Idealen eines neuen Menschenbildes, werden tänzerische Entgleisungen ausgeschlossen.'

⁹¹ 'Gute, humanistische Traditionen sind zu übernehmen und mit unseren Mitteln weiterzuentwickeln, so daß wir von der Bühne herab das Schöne, das Geschmackvolle verbreiten. Mit reiner Artistik allein, so gekonnt sie auch sein mag, ist nicht mehr viel zu bestellen. Die Schau, die Ausstattungsrevue ist in unserer Kunstgattung in den Mittelpunkt gerückt.'

Compared to Herrmann's 'socialist handstand' from 1959, Struck's 1963 contribution to the convoluted discussions about how to advance the variety and revue arts had a similar impact on the intellectual debates. In the following years, various contributions replied to Deputy Minister of Culture Kurt Bork's polemic of whether circus performance alone was not effective anymore (Bork, 1963:1-2). Theatre journalist Ruth Oelschlegel, for example, adopted this view and warned the Palast against a bourgeois decadence that must be countered by 'pedagogical elements (and) capable directors' (1963:18)⁹², alluding once again to the importance of dramaturgical framings. But by that time, the Palast had already redefined revue as a structural principle under the influence of socialist realism and acquired a number of themes and ideas, as I have delineated in chapter 1. Palast dramaturge Tilgner further differentiated the Palast's form of revue as having already been appropriated by socialist cultural practice: 'This form, that we have created with the help of all the means available to us, we are calling revue, because in our opinion we do not yet have a better term' (in Tilgner and Struck, 1964:8)⁹³. Revue, according to him, was more than a structural principle, but a new form of programming content. Frequently used throughout various documents is the word *durchgestaltet* ('worked out to the last detail'), which implies a thematic unity of plot, dances, circus acts, stage designs, choice of music, and employment of stage effects—or simply a re-theatricalisation.⁹⁴ According to Tilgner, theatricality in socialist-realist revues emerges if 'the stage enables tangibly experienced place and time with the help of living, moving humans who carry the aesthetic representations, metaphors, and effects' (1972:n.p.)⁹⁵. The *durchgestaltete* revue of the 1960s and 1970s would accept as its foundation not the stage, but the moving body, and extend the theatrical means from there towards a greater elaboration of the revue's theme.

This shift towards a holistically designed revue spanned almost a decade. It started to appear in the theatre's repertoire proposals—'The perspective plan of the Friedrichstadt-Palast intends to gradually

⁹² 'erzieherische Elemente [und] die Qualität der Programmgestalter'

⁹³ 'Diese Form, die wir mit allen uns zur Verfügung stehenden Mitteln zu gestalten suchen, bezeichnen wir als Revue, weil es unserer Meinung für sie noch keinen besseren Begriff gibt.'

⁹⁴ For example, references to 'durchgestaltet' can be found in Struck, 1968; Tilgner, 1976:27, as well as in many *Artistik* contributions regarding the programming of revue and variety entertainments.

⁹⁵ 'auf der Bühne in konkret erlebtem Raum, in konkret erlebter Zeit, mit lebenden, bewegten Menschen als Trägern, Realisatoren der ästhetischen Abbilder, Sinnbilder und Wirkungen'

develop the theatre into a revue theatre' (Friedrichstadt-Palast, 1967b:1)⁹⁶—and was continued to be regarded as 'under development' until the mid-1970s. The repertoire proposal of 1973 still states that the Palast will attempt to produce the '[r]evue as the principle form of our monthly programmes' (Friedrichstadt-Palast, 1972:2)⁹⁷. By 1975, the Palast finally stated that staging 'musical-terpsichorean revues...by simultaneously lessening the amount of spoken language...has proven successful and will be continued' (Friedrichstadt-Palast: 1974:1)⁹⁸. And indeed, an East German historian noticed about the Palast revue of the 1970s: 'The grand revue of the '20s has long been consigned to history' (Carlé and Martens, 1987:163)⁹⁹, suggesting that the socialist appropriation of revue vocabulary had been successful.

Despite all these ideological and aesthetic explanations, there were very real-existing economic reasons for the Palast's turn to the revue extravaganza. In an unpublished letter to the *Artistik* magazine, director Struck sought to enlighten his critics by making an example of culture scholar Horst Slomma's public critique of the Palast's development. While the Palast aimed for a re-theatricalisation of the variety in order to arrive at the revue, Slomma complained that such a return to the theatre as illusion countered the demand for realism. According to Slomma, variety could more easily fulfil realist criteria. While the Palast took on the challenge to create realist revues by means of appropriating bodily movement, Slomma doubted that this was possible at all without 'a pronounced interest in the presentations of the ... spoken word' (1968:7)¹⁰⁰ to illustrate 'socialist life through contemporary situations and expectations' (ibid)¹⁰¹.¹⁰² In his letter to *Artistik*, Struck defied Slomma's ideological stance and replied that a greater confidence in the expressiveness of the moving body, which came along with the turn towards the terpsichorean and *durchgestaltete* revue, was necessary from a purely economic point of view:

Since 1961, not a single variety programme, whether with a conférencier, incorporated ballets or songs, even with a prime cast, has allowed us to reach our monthly targets...In

⁹⁶ 'Der Perspektivplan des Friedrichstadt-Palastes setzt die Aufgabe, das "Haus der 3000" allmählich zum Revue-Theater zu entwickeln.'

⁹⁷ 'Revue als Hauptform unserer Monatproduktionen'

⁹⁸ 'Die Konzeption, musikalisch-tänzerische Revuen [...] unter Reduzierung des gesprochenen Worts im geeigneten Maß zu inszenieren, hat sich als richtig und erfolgreich erwiesen und wird weitergeführt.'

⁹⁹ 'Die große Revue der zwanziger Jahre ist längst Historie'

¹⁰⁰ 'ausgeprägtes Interesse an [...] Wortdarbietungen'

¹⁰¹ 'das sozialistische Leben durch aktuelle Situationen und Erwartungshaltungen'

¹⁰² There are more articles about the difference between variety and revue, see Tilgner, 1968:4-6; Otto, 1968:12-14.

order to have been considered sold out, we would have needed the number who attended in one month to have come within the first ten days. (Struck, 1968:1)¹⁰³

The creative leadership of the Palast even suggested installing a new curtain system in the auditorium that would allow them to close the upper tier and thereby reduce the seating capacity from 2,960 to approximately 1,500 (Struck, 1967b:11)¹⁰⁴ for less well-attended performances. At the same time, Palast dramaturg Wolfgang Tilgner further specified the inherent creative restriction of variety and that '[n]o idea, conception, nor message had ever worked immediately and functionally from a dramaturgical point of view' (Tilgner, 1968:5)¹⁰⁵. Revue programmes, Struck continued in his letter, were much better received and could run for several months, because audiences would return to watch them again.¹⁰⁶ Struck's aim was to reduce the number of shows from monthly productions to '4 to 6 productions per year...in order to bring out quality' (Struck, 1967a:4)¹⁰⁷. In the end, Slomma's ideological stance towards dance practice confirms what dance scholar Jens Giersdorf has said about the views expressed by party officials about dance in relation to the doctrines of socialist realism: 'dance, movement and choreography was [sic] never emancipated from narrative and message' (Giersdorf, 2013:22). Finding the manners in which this narrative was to be imparted through the humanist appropriation of dance's protocols became the Palast's project for the 1970s.

The ramifications of this economic state of affairs were of an aesthetic nature: the reduced number of circus acts required dance to take a greater share in a show. This shift also required a number of new kinds of programming ideas, like 'music-dramatic theatre, *Schlager* parades,¹⁰⁸ fashion revues' (Struck,

¹⁰³ 'Jedes Nummernprogramm, ob Non-stop mit Sprecher, Ballett und auch teilweise Gesang, auch bei bester Besetzung, hat uns seit 1961 nicht einmal das Monatssoll erfüllen lassen. [...] Die Zuschauermengen eines Monats auf 10 Tage zusammengezogen, hätten den Friedrichstadt-Palast gut und gerne ausgefüllt.'

¹⁰⁴ 'Die Platzkapazität von 2.570 gut sichtbaren Sitzen und 390 schlecht sichtbaren Säulenplätzen gegenüber der Bevölkerungsdichte Berlins ist zu gewaltig. (...) Wir haben wiederholt vorgeschlagen, den Oberrang durch ein Vorhangsystem zu schließen, so daß wir auf ungefähr 1.500 Sitzplätze kommen würden.'

¹⁰⁵ 'Nie wurde die Idee, die Konzeption, die Aussage im Variété vollkommen, unmittelbar und funktionell, also dramaturgisch endgültig realisiert.'

¹⁰⁶ At this time, the Palast received large amounts of state funding. During the preparations for the 4th economic conference of the Palast in February 1968, the *Vereinbarung gegenseitiger Verpflichtungen 1968/1969* ('Mutual agreement 1968/1969'), which detailed the Palast's obligations to meet the decisions of the Seventh Party Conference (April 1967), states that the Palast projected its revenues of 1968 to amount to 2,700,000 Marks, but would spend 5,820,000 Marks. (Friedrichstadt-Palast, 1968c:2).

¹⁰⁷ 'Ich sprach schon oft davon, die Gründung eines Revue-Theaters zu verwirklichen, das sich mit 4 bis 6 Produktionen im Jahr begnügt. (...) Damit gedenken wir, die Qualität unserer Programme zu steigern.'

¹⁰⁸ 'Schlager' means 'hit' and 'was originally used not to refer to a particular genre but as an indicator of commercial success. Schlager music itself derived from operetta and dance melodies of the nineteenth and early twentieth

1967b:1)¹⁰⁹. Dance was meant to signify new themes and topics to convey in a terpsichorean manner society's humanist ideals. For example, *Revue-Akademie, 1. Lektion* ('Revue Academy, 1st Lesson', 1968), was a revue that pretended that it was explaining the genre's rules to emerging artists in the field; *Warenhaus der guten Laune* ('Department Store of Joy', 1960 and 1969), explored the happy sides of GDR consumer culture in a Berlin department store; *Für Auge und Ohr* ('For Eyes and Ears', 1965), presented dance in an abstract stage set; *R wie Revue* ('R as in Revue', 1972), demonstrated the idiosyncrasies of revue dances in tableaux that were inspired by the letters of the alphabet, (e.g., E for Erotic, see chapter 1).

2.3.2. The 1970s: The socialist revue falters

The re-theatricalisation of revue theatre without the necessary modernisations of the building stock forced the Palast to further focus on the expressiveness of the revue bodies, as well as finding new show ideas that would frame them. When Erich Honecker came to power in 1971, humanism as an influencing factor of socialist appropriation 'could only be found in ambitious reading matter' (Groschopp, 2013:25)¹¹⁰ and became less a term to be employed in actual practice. In the Palast's theatre making, humanism's place was taken by less theoretical, but more practice-based concepts, like the classical-technical vortex. The reason for this general shift away from a further development of the ideas of humanism was attributed by historian Gerd Dietrich to the shift from Walter Ulbricht's *Kultursozialismus* (cultural socialism) to his successor Erich Honecker's *Konsumsozialismus* (consumer socialism).¹¹¹ Honecker, having been less ambitious about cultural theory than his predecessor, neglected the cultural development and under his rule, "humanism" became a worn-out cliché in the last 15 years of the GDR. Still—or for this very reason—it remained the prime structure of reasoning for practiced culture' (ibid:25-6)¹¹². In the revue arts, humanism became a state, a fixed set of ideals, not a process continuously responding to societal circumstances. The stagnating development of humanism as a creative horizon together with the closed borders and a concomitant lack

century' (Campbell, 2002:235). It is rooted in German folk traditions and processes their rhythms, harmonies, and in parts instrumentation. Therefore, it renders known material in a slightly modernized guise.

¹⁰⁹ 'Einbeziehung interessanter Neuinszenierungen, wie Palastical, Schlagerparaden, ständiger Moderevuen.'

¹¹⁰ 'ambitionierten Speziallektüren'

¹¹¹ For more on Gerd Dietrich's concepts of *Kultursozialismus* and *Konsumsozialismus*, see Groschopp, 2013:25.

¹¹² "'Humanismus" wurde dann in den letzten 15 Jahren der DDR weitgehend eine Worthölse. Trotzdem—oder vielleicht grade deshalb—gab er einer praktischen Kulturarbeit weiter die Begründungsfigur.'

of external influence engendered several practice-related consequences that shaped the 1970s in Palast practice and finally resulted in a faltering of embodied revue practice.

This faltering was the consequence of three concomitant developments. First, the Palast was increasingly desperate for new ideas. In a letter marking the end of the season of 1966/67, Struck already encouraged his whole ensemble, which included everyone from dancers, via technicians, to box office clerks, that, what '[w]e need an abundance of ideas and we will never refuse to highly reward you for your extra input' (Struck, 1967a:6)¹¹³. Although the archive does not further evidence the origin of show ideas and how ideas for revue programmes have travelled, it shows that the need for framing devices was high. Throughout the afore-mentioned contributions to *Artistik* magazine, the need for ideas was especially highlighted. As much as these calls for ideas can be understood in relation to the increasingly isolated country, the search focussed especially on socialist themes that would portray socialist life, and western societies had understandably less to say about this. But it does imply that finding positive narratives for Palast performances was increasingly hard.

Second, to remedy the lack of ideas, Struck gave up his *künstlerische Alleininszenierungsarbeit* ('sole artistic leadership as a stage director') in 1969, and initiated the establishment of *Inszenierungskollektive* ('staging collectives') who would research ideas and take on their preparation, creative implementation, and stage them as revues (ibid:17). While before, productions were conceived, planned, rehearsed, and staged successively, productions were now allowed longer and parallel periods for research and development. Four directors, in particular, created four new framing formats for the socialist revue. Struck himself remained responsible for folksy revues, Detlef-Elken Kruber led the musical-terpsichorean collective, Volkmar Neumann led *Ausstattungsrevuen* ('revue extravaganza') and Werner Schurbaum's collective continued the tradition of the variety programme.¹¹⁴ Every collective was led by a director and comprised of one or several choreographers, a stage designer, a costume designer, a musical director, and a stage manager. All of them

¹¹³ 'Ideen können wir noch und noch gebrauchen und wir werden uns nie versperren, Sonderleistungen gut zu honorieren.'

¹¹⁴ There are several mentions of staging collectives throughout the archive documents of the 1970s, but none contains a list of who these collectives comprised. The list given here stems from the minutes of a post-conference discussion from 1976, see Tilgner, 1976:25[discussion minutes]).

shared the theatre's already available infrastructure, including the corps du ballet, the dramaturg, technicians, lighting and sound designers, musicians, and stage hands.

Third, the changed mode of production might have given the staging collectives more time to develop ideas, but the implications for dancers were immense with dancers dancing at the limits of what was physically possible. As a response to the production regimen of the 1970s, the classical-technical vortex as a standardised method to aestheticise dance protocols was thus also necessary to uphold the tremendously high production output. Between 1967 and 1975, a new Palast show premiered nearly every month.¹¹⁵ In 1968, Palast ballet mistress Gisela Walther hailed the technical expertise of her dancers, but bemoaned the time they had available to rehearse new dances: 'A dance of about two minutes' length should usually be rehearsed for about six hours. But we only have 90 minutes available at a maximum' (in H.N., 1968:9)¹¹⁶. As will be examined below, this caused a concurrent simplicity in step material and a high degree of repetition from show to show. Guest choreographer Walter Schumann adds that 'we only have 16 hours available to rehearse a new show. All choreographies must be ready in that time frame and all dances be completely rehearsed' (ibid)¹¹⁷. This happened at the cost of training hours, which had to be given to choreographers to rehearse their step material. A few years later, in a portrait on the Palast's dance training, Michael Henselmann bemoaned that '[t]raining will be facilitated only if there is time for it. But training is a must, and every minute for it is hard-won' (1972b:n.p.)¹¹⁸.¹¹⁹ Additionally to the Palast's own productions, the ballet was embedded in a new televised entertainment programme called *Ein Kessel Buntes* ('A Kettle of Colour'), beginning in January 1972. With six two-hour shows per year and receivable in West Germany it extended the Palast's revue arts across and beyond the country and became the epitome of East German

¹¹⁵ The reduced production schedule as aimed for by Struck was only achieved towards the end of the 1970s. Nowadays, a new Grand Show premieres every other year, allowing for a much more complex show structure and production period.

¹¹⁶ 'Ein Tanz von etwa zwei Minuten Länge müßte normalerweise sechs Stunden lang einstudiert werden. Uns stehen aber höchstens 90 Minuten zur Verfügung.'

¹¹⁷ 'Vielleicht lassen sich die Ausführungen meiner Kollegin noch besser illustrieren, wenn ich ihnen verrate, daß wir im Palast für die Einstudierung eines kompletten Programms selten mehr als insgesamt 16 Stunden zur Verfügung haben. In diesem Zeitraum muß die Choreographie stehen, müssen alle Nummern sitzen.'

¹¹⁸ 'Training gibt es, wenn Zeit ist. Training jedoch muß sein; aber es muß jede Minute erkämpft werden.'

¹¹⁹ Today, new dances are usually rehearsed in blocks over the course of several weeks, in a period of approximately 15 months before the show's premiere. (Based on my own experience of being member of the production team.)

entertainment. For the Palast's production schedule, this meant a further tightening, with choreographies soon cross-fertilising each other.

These infrastructural changes of revue production made it necessary for choreographers to rely on the classical-technical vortex as a method that had reached broad consensus in its ability to make performance socialist, because it worked on the assumption that classical movement protocols imparted humanist qualities. While the vortex method could be seen as choreographers unthinkingly complying with the artistic doctrine, it also offered a certain safespace for artistic production: as long as choreographies were appropriated within the confines of the vortex, choreographers could proceed in rendering entertainment for the masses. In order to have sufficient material to appropriate, a socialist repertoire was formed. In the 1970s, revue became a literal review of past practices and revue practice increasingly involved consulting the institutional archive. Revue dance history had been surveyed for 'traditional "use-value"' (Gommlich, 1989:6)¹²⁰ for large-scale aestheticisation and, according to Gommlich, borrowed from classical, modern, folklore, comical or ballroom dance. In the western world, revue, when thought of in terms of dance forms and embodied spectacle, exhibits the 'glamour of the ornamental' (Klooss & Reuter, 1980:39)¹²¹ and is inherently linked to the forms of spectacle of the 1920s and 30s. Officially, the dazzling mix of trained bodies, exclusive décor, and spatial choreographies that created an effect of 'never ending movement' (ibid:33), had been rejected by East German theatre makers as excess. These markers were thus replaced by the archives already acquired and appropriated by socialists: folk dance was aestheticised through the classical-technical vortex and worked in alliance with the conventional revue ornaments.

One of the many file cabinets that hold the images and programme booklets of the revues in chronological order is named *Tänze* ('dances') and holds example images of revues between the early 1960s and the mid-1970s. The focus on dance in this particular time-frame suggests both a shift towards dance's self-consciousness and a continued humanist aestheticisation of dance vocabulary through altering their technical protocols. The folders (named, for example, 'Czech', 'Operetta', 'Romanian', 'Havanna/Mexico', 'Beat', 'Tango', 'Cancan', 'Japan', 'Kalinka', 'Russian', 'Polovtsian Dances', image 2.19) seem to indicate that the Palast's show makers have turned to their own reserves to locate vocabularies and tableaux worth

¹²⁰ 'tradierten „Gebrauchswert“'

¹²¹ 'Glamour des Ornamentalen'

reworking in future shows. The folders seem to have been created in the early 1970s, ten years after the discontinuation of free movement and the increasing isolation of the country. When the use of global forms of dance became highly restricted by doctrine and accessibility, the Palast started reviewing its own archives. This also indicates that the turn to abstract revues at the same time had been accompanied by an archival turn that aided in puzzling out practices from the past. In a surprising manner, folk vocabulary still dominated the assorted dances, supporting Giersdorf's argument that East German choreographers still 'utilized the constructive power of the folk material instead of just preserving it as a cultural artefact' (2013:32); see image 2.20 that shows a Czech folkdance from *Melodien der Welt* (1974). On the stage, moments that structure space with bodies and décor on plain level or vertically became paramount and evoked notions of the iconic moments of revue group dance on stage and in film, but the bodies are depicted most often with attitude and ordered in easily identifiable groups.



IMAGES 2.19-20. 'Tänze' file cabinet. 2.19 The file cabinet and the riders. **2.20** Image found in 'Czech' folder: Ingeborg Rothe and Detlef Völker from the revue *Melodien der Welt* (1974).

The above-mentioned production practices and the revue's concomitant archival turn resulted in a creative standstill of the socialist revue to a degree where it was not able to contribute to the ideology's imperative of progression anymore. While entertainments would still be rendered, the criticism from both within and outside the institution gained weight and caused an increasing irrelevance of the genre. The *Artistik* magazine, now named *Unterhaltungskunst*, only reported on Palast-related stories if it was a review or yet another morale-boosting slogan by party functionaries to uphold the fight for a better tomorrow (Linzer, 1969; Heller, 1983). There were no further publications on the dramaturgical nature of revue theatre or practice-related deliberations. This suggests that the Palast had been left to itself to create the kind of socialist entertainment that it considered appropriate. On a national level, the late 1970s were marked by

increased ideological pragmatism, the expatriation of ideological dissidents,¹²² a growing generational conflict of young people who felt like *Hineingeborene*, subjects born into a political situation they could not change,¹²³ and a general discontent for the stagnating improvement of living standards. Compared to the 1950s, the late 1970s were not a time made for experimentation, but increasingly brought about a new wave of cultural conservatism. Although the Palast was part of this broader development, the foundation for the immutable rigidity was self-imposed through the production practices discussed above.

Two institutional developments protrude in the analysis of the archive material that have not yet been seen together. By the late 1970s, the unmodified application of the classical-technical vortex had created a degree of homogenisation of different dance vocabularies—mostly folk—, while the harsh production schedules generated ‘choreographic makeshift solutions’ (Henselmann, 1972b:n.p.)¹²⁴ that were based on recycling familiar material. As a result of these developments, revue dance lost its excitement: critics increasingly took issue with the unwanted effigies of the sentimental bourgeois revue that the socialists had originally set out to eradicate through their systems of appropriation. But due to tight production schedules and the unvarying application of the same methods to aestheticise the moving body, the socialist revue actually radiated restraint rather than the pleasures of socialist life. Or, if we over-read this development, socialist life seemed to have been not as joyful as the revue tried to impart and the real-life conditions thus took their toll on socialist performance practice.



IMAGES 2.21-22. Recurring movement vocabulary using the example of *Das war's* (February/March 1976). 2.21 Hand to the sky. 2.22 Mass kick.

¹²² I discuss the ramifications of Wolf Biermann's expatriation in 1976 in the next chapter.

¹²³ See Jäger, 1995:172; Vees-Gulani and Cohen-Pfister, 2010.

¹²⁴ 'choreographische Verlegenheitslösungen'

Dance became highly repetitive. Specific spatial configurations, such as the v-shaped organisation of bodies who are being assigned step material on the spot, moments of apotheosis in act finales, the creation of depth by using the walkway in front of the orchestra pit, are structures that re-appeared frequently throughout the decade. In this regard, folk had become a national repertoire, which was, through the classical-technical vortex, aestheticized for the big stage and was thus deemed easily reproducible at the Palast. In an interview¹²⁵, Wolfgang Stiebritz¹²⁶, solo dancer at the Palast between 1967 and 1984, later head and deputy head of the ballet ensemble, confirmed that “[t]he choreographers did indeed rely on known step material” (own interview)¹²⁷. Stiebritz stated that there was a lack of choreographers who would have been able to stage dances in the required format. Due to the constraints on time to develop and learn entirely new dances, the Palast employed choreographers who were familiar with what the dancers already mastered. “In consequence,” Stiebritz explained, “the step material had been relatively consistent”¹²⁸. In this production context, the Palast’s reliance on forms of folk and show dances seemed a necessity, rather than an ideological constraint. Folk archives, as mentioned above, rendered a rich vocabulary of exotic and vernacular dances easy to recall that existed as a shared memory amongst the dancers, who had acquired these in their training. Folk had thus been a fairly easy way of creating a diverse range of dances. “Folklore had never really been an issue,”¹²⁹ Stiebritz said. “If a director required folklore, we just delivered. (...) The step material we all had got taught in our dance training anyways. No problem.”¹³⁰ Folk dance had become a uniquely East German vocabulary that allowed them to remain vernacular. According to Stiebritz, “we weren’t guided by western theatres.”¹³¹—but surely by their own repeating types.

¹²⁵ See Appendix 2 for participant information sheet and consent form.

¹²⁶ Interviewee Wolfgang Stiebritz was born in Magdeburg in 1939. He received his dance training at Staatstheater Dresden (1960-1963) and was subsequently employed by the Landestheater Dessau. He joined the Friedrichstadt-Palast as a solo dancer in 1967. In 1984, he finished his career as an active dancer and became production stage manager at the Palast. From 1987, he was assistant to the Palast’s ballet director. Between 1990-1993, he was the ballet director; deputy ballet director between 1994-2007. In 2007, after forty years, he left the Palast and was awarded honorary membership in the theatre’s ensemble.

¹²⁷ ‘Natürlich haben sich die Choreographen auf bekanntes Schrittmateriale gestützt.’

¹²⁸ ‘Dadurch blieb das Schrittmateriale auch relativ konstant.’

¹²⁹ ‘Volkstänze waren für uns nie ein Problem.’

¹³⁰ ‘Wenn ein Regisseur Volkstanz wollte, haben wir geliefert. Die Schritte haben wir ja alle in unserer Ausbildung beigebracht bekommen. Kein Problem.’

¹³¹ ‘Wir haben uns ja nicht an westlichen Theatern orientiert.’

Another side-effect of the choreographic make-shift solutions and their repetitiveness is that the choreographies of the 1970s appear easily reproducible, not only for performers, but also for audiences. When looking at photographs of dance tableaux, one cannot escape a sense of sentimentalism, now re-coded as grace through what seems like classic step material. Stiebritz said that the “simplicity and ease of the dances had physically by far not been as debilitating as it is today. (...) But as a revue dancer I took great pains to be able to toe-dance as well”¹³². In its reception, however, dance was perceived as the bodily equivalent of the show’s catchy hit songs: ‘Similar to the Schlager music, the audience needs to be able to identify with the revue and variety dances in a direct and rhythmical manner, he needs to be able to mentally participate’ (Henselmann, 1972a:n.p.)¹³³. A number of specific dance moves are continuously depicted on the archived images: a mass body moving the same limb in the same moment, evoking the mass movement as an easy task, usually through a reaching for the sun (image 2.21) or a kick (image 2.22). Although these moments could have been picked because they were easily photographable, they still convey recurring sentiments in almost every show. Choreographing dance as easily re-creatable may tell the socialist story of ‘anything is easily achievable,’ but, since these dances were not embedded in a specifically socialist tale anymore, their efficacy sprung from the technical protocols. Despite Kropp’s efforts during the mid-1960s to denounce *verkitschte Variétéarme* (‘sentimentalised variety arms’), the arms still seem to sentimentalize the bodies (image 2.24). Kitsch, the unwanted effigy of revue, had been discarded for yet another kind of affected movement style that had been fabricated in the pursuit for new socialist expressions. The socialist revue could be regarded to have approximated again what it had originally tried to overcome, only the ways in which it produced this softening effect had changed.

¹³² ‘Damals war ich der Meinung, der körperliche Verschleiß ist bei einem klassischen Tänzer viel größer als bei einem Showtänzer. Heute hat es sich schon wieder verschoben. Heute sind die Anforderungen an einen Showtänzer so groß, dass es schon fast ans Artistische grenzt. Die Einfachheit und die Leichtigkeit, mit der wir es damals getrieben haben, war körperlich nicht so belastend, wie im klassischem Tanz. (...) Aber selbst als Revuetänzer war ich auch bestrebt, auf Spitze zu tanzen.’

¹³³ ‘Mit ihm kann sich – im Falle des Revue- und Variété-Tanzes, der Zuschauer, genau wie bei Schlagergesang, rhythmisch direkt identifizieren, hier kann er innerlich sozusagen “mitmachen”.’

2.4. Coda: A blessing in disguise



IMAGE 2.23. *Seekiste* (February 1980). Curtain call during the last performance at the old Friedrichstadt-Palast.

This chapter has argued that the classical-technical vortex was meant to reframe the paradox that arose out of socialist virtuosity, that is the incompatibility between the body's alienated labour and the system's narrative futurity that was imposed through socialist realism. Whether or not this theoretical conflict had been noticed as such in discourse or during the daily interactions on and off stage cannot be proven. But the dialogues between theoreticians and practitioners as outlined in this chapter evidence the impasses of socialist world-building. The classical-technical vortex seemed like an intervention in practice that was meant to cover up these theoretical shortcomings. What Herrmann started in 1959 as a provocation to understanding the moving body in socialist terms developed into a solidified understanding of the body. But these conversations and the techniques they eventually entailed were never updated for the socialist revue, causing these methods and desired scripted affects to lose their appeal.

In 1976, dance scholar Werner Gommlich discussed the terpsichorean revues and critiqued the lack of new dances in favour of modifications of what already existed. He especially took issue with the glorification of the classical technique: 'the widespread fallacy that a kind of modification of traditional

forms of stage dance—for instance through classical technique—meets the requirements of the entertaining arts must be overcome’ (1976:7)¹³⁴. In fact, Kropp herself had warned of this fallacy in 1964 already: ‘Stylising dance on the basis of classical dance is possible, but not a choreographic diktat’ (1964:12)¹³⁵. As evidenced by the archive and the developments during the 1970s, it became exactly that. Besides, the requirements set by the party, which included a high production output and an ever-increasing productivity, did not allow for enough space to consensually develop the revue in an alternative socialist way. Anticipating this development, Kropp wrote in 1964: ‘The long-term lack of a masterplan for the development of variety and revue dance at the Friedrichstadt-Palast will one day make itself felt as the greatest deficiency’ (1964:13)¹³⁶.



IMAGE 2.24. *Seekiste* (February 1980). Fairy-like beauties on the proscenium stage, framing the orchestra pit during the revue’s finale tableau.

¹³⁴ ‘der weit verbreitete Irrtum, für den Tanz in der Unterhaltungskunst genüge eine Art modifizierte Anwendung herkömmlicher Formen des Bühnentanzes—etwa der klassischen Technik—, muß generell überwunden werden.’

¹³⁵ ‘auf der Basis des klassischen stilisiert werden (...) Das ist zwar möglich, aber kein choreographisches Diktat.’

¹³⁶ ‘Dieses Fehlen einer künstlerischen Gesamtkonzeption für die Entwicklung des Varieté- und Revuetanzes wird sich in der Perspektivplanung des Friedrichstadt-Palastes eines Tages als größter Mangel mit bemerkbar machen.’

In fact, by 1989, the classical-technical vortex had lost its efficacy. Dance scholar Werner Gommlich called for the creation of a new dance style that he termed ‘show dance’ and which he defined as ‘a kind of genre that comprises a multitude of stylistic and dance-technical contingencies’ (1989:29)¹³⁷. Gommlich identified this dance style’s aesthetic objective as a ‘particular way of “exhibiting”’ (ibid:28)¹³⁸ socialist convictions that would counter the effects of the classical-technical vortex:

Restraint and poetry, themes that address internalisation or difficult problems correspond less to the character of show dance, than power, joy, optimism, erotic, enthusiasm, and consciousness for the present (ibid:29-30).¹³⁹

Although ‘restraint and poetry’, or, in fact, ‘terpsichorean grace and control’, had once structured socialist virtuosity, by 1989, these affects were replaced by more optimistic ones. Too late, as only a year later, the German Democratic Republic acceded to the Federal Republic of Germany.

In the late 1970s, however, the Palast already realised the shortcomings of its dance practice. In the process of re-theatricalising the revue, it understood its genre in terms of bodily labour, and while it thought in those terms, the creative heads of the institution conceptualised a new theatre. In light of the socialist performance’s decreasing efficacy, the increasing deterioration of the building was a blessing in disguise. The theatre had to close in February of 1980. The new theatre opened in 1984.

Seekiste (“Sea Crate”) (image 2.23), was the very last performance in the old Friedrichstadt-Palast on 29 February 1980. The production’s photographs show once more what Kropp pejoratively described as *verkitschte Varietéanzgarne*. In addition, the fairy-esque costumes by Palast designer Wolf Leder conjure forth the ghosts of the sentimental bourgeois revues of the 1920s, which the Palast originally set out to rewrite (image 2.24). The classical-technical vortex paired with make-shift solutions and a reliance on classical revue vocabulary ended the socialist re-theatricalisation of the revue extravaganza at Am Zirkus 1.

¹³⁷ ‘Show-Tanz ist eher als eine Art Genre zu bezeichnen, das eine Vielzahl stilistischer und tanztechnischer Möglichkeiten umfasst.’

¹³⁸ ‘eine besondere Art des “Zur-Schau-Stellen”’

¹³⁹ ‘Verhaltenheit und Lyrik, Themen, die auf Verinnerlichung orientieren, und diffizile oder komplizierte Probleme enthalten, entsprechen dem Charakter des Show-Tanzes weniger als Kraft, Freude, Optimismus, Erotik, Enthusiasmus und Gegenwartsbewusstsein.’

Techno-futurism: The dialectics of staging technology



IMAGE 3.01. Finale of *Premiere: Friedrichstraße 107* (1984). The apron is occupied by the water pool and cascades. The main stage revolve contains a set piece made up of arches, bestowing a dynamic element to the upper stage area. The tiered and ascending auditorium holds 1895 people. The lighting sources, usually rigged before the stage, are integrated into the plastered ceiling and give it its unique shape.

Only four years after the last performance of *Seekiste* on 29 February 1980 at the old Friedrichstadt-Palast, the new theatre opened at Friedrichstraße 107, just a few blocks eastwards from the old location. The new Palast started yet another phase of cultural acquisition that completed the Palast's ambitions of appropriating revue practice. This chapter discusses the theatre's genesis as firmly based in the Palast's practices of performance restoration, which, in a response to the wider cultural development of the country, shifted to aestheticise the theatre's revue performances through a new and distinct technological thinking. While the Palast focused on acquiring and appropriating themes, dramaturgical structures, and bodies between the 1950s and the late 1970s, from 1984, it extended its cultural practices to the whole staging apparatus. The reconstruction of the Friedrichstadt-Palast as a *Volltheater*, that is, a theatre that would meet a certain

standard of stage-technological capabilities, thus involves considering how the theatre's architecture was reconstructed as part of its practice, that is, through its particular ways of *doing* revue.

As this chapter makes a case for understanding the new Palast through its practices, I will start by analysing the theatre's ways of reconstructing revue behaviour in relation to a new technological thinking. *Premiere: Friedrichstraße 107* was the inaugural revue that premiered on 27 April 1984. In a notorious Palast potpourri-style, the revue presented, in unrelated tableaux, the new technological fixtures as parts of its prevailing revue practices. Four years (or six large-scale productions and twice as many seasonal revues) later, *Traumvisionen* ('Dreamvisions') was the first terpsichorean revue in the new Palast. It was praised for its cunning use of technology and convincing staging of bodies. While *Premiere* had been imagined at a time when the makers were still physically present in the old theatre, not knowing how the new space was going to work, *Traumvisionen* was a show that was conceived with the makers having been physically present in the new theatre. The two case studies show how the Palast's revue-technological thinking evolved as a form of the daily labour of finding and implementing ideas that involved the coordination of technologies and bodies on a new stage over a period of only four years. The aim of this chapter is to qualify the degree to which the institution adapted to its new theatre and a new kind of theatrical technophilia restructured its cultural practices.

In comparison to the old Friedrichstadt-Palast, the new theatre was purpose-built: while the old theatre used to be a covered market hall, the new Palast was meant to be a theatre from its inception.¹ Image 3.1 shows the stage and the amphitheatrical auditorium of the new Friedrichstadt-Palast during the finale of the inaugural gala revue in 1984. Having new technology also meant having the capacity to hide it, which

¹ For many years of the Palast's history, there were actually two theatres; the main room that this thesis discusses, and a smaller venue for cabaret and later night revues. Here, the Palast aimed at acquiring the traditions of a German form of political cabaret. It engendered a political as well as artistic counterpoint to what was presented on the main stage and grew with the building. As late as 1978, two years before the old Palast closed, a smaller stage at the Palast, called *Das Ei* ('The Egg'), became the Palast's place to hatch small-scale politicised forms of wordy forms of cabaret and variety. In the new theatre from 1984, it was called *Kleine Revue* ('small revue'), and, in terms of its technological finesses, was unique in the entertainment landscape of the GDR: 'a small theatre with a bar, a small gallery, and an audience that sat at served tables. Small scale theatrical performances were staged with the means of the revue: ballet, circus acts, singing...Shows started at 10.30 pm...[Afterwards] the small podium stage was lowered and became a dance floor until the early morning hours' (Welke, 2009:116). The theatre provided a version of the revue extravaganza for grownups and thereby completed the acquisition of revue-related practices.

implies that the new theatre was not only about the exhibition of new machines, but to also allow the creative team to make choices about what they wanted spectators to see. As I will explain as this chapter continues, the new Palast allowed for a highly flexible stage, but also for that flexibility to be read as either mechanic and automated processes or parts of an illusion. The theatre's main technological machinery was in and under its apron stage: for the first time in a GDR theatre, a hydrostatic positioning system was implemented that allowed the technicians to run the apron's lift vertically while rotating it on its own axis.² This hidden machinery underneath the stage could convert the apron into a pool with water cascades (as shown in image 3.1) or an ice rink. Compared to the old space, the new theatre's proportions were considerably larger: the proscenium arch measuring 24m in width was wider, the main stage was roughly 60m deep, the auditorium mirrored the hemi-circular shape of the apron, and the auditorium's ceiling housed several effect machines, lighting equipment, and flying tracks. So that the large stage could be operated quickly, movable platforms could enter from the upstage area and the side stages. Although I will discuss the development of the theatre's technology later in this chapter, it is important to realise for now that the theatre housed an unprecedented number of mechanised and remotely controlled systems in order to allow the creation of never-before-seen moments, that is, the changing of physical space within the visible stage area, which amounts to 2,144m² (Welke, 2009:7). In order to organise these movements, effect machines added layers of visual spectacle: lasers, pyrotechnic installations, a cyclorama, video and large-scale projection technology, and cutting-edge lighting equipment completed the new theatre.

In terms of performance practice, it was not necessarily the new theatre but a different way of thinking about this new technology that structured the Palast's changing directorial practice in the new space. From a Marxian perspective, technology was a determining factor of progress and an indicator of a changing economic system: on the one hand, the new Friedrichstadt-Palast as a theatre building was a tangible product of the country's technological progress; on the other hand, it was important for the Palast to acquire technology as part of its cultural practice. The technological thinking was thus a way of shaping cultural practice, which, as such, formed a new horizon of doing that was embedded in a nationwide technophilia. According to historian Dolores L. Augustine, 'East Germany legitimized and undergirded its

² For a detailed description of the technological fixtures see Baudirektion, 1984 and Vetter, 2005.

existence with technology' (2009:xii). This conception of technology links the new Palast to the socialist country's humanist striving that I have described in chapter two. If we consider the new stage's pioneering elements as legitimising socialism, the new theatre can be understood as the country wanting to reinforce its ideological superiority in the Cold War. It was believed that '[w]hile capitalists used technologies to promote exploitation and war, socialists deployed technology to the benefit of their people and all mankind' (ibid:xii). Since technology was understood through cultural practice, it was perceived as deterministic and provided structure and meaning for human life in socialism. Through their tangibility on stage, new devices, mostly mechanical and electrically automated, represented a causal efficacy between scientific progress and cultural deployment.³

From this viewpoint, I analyse the role of technology in the context of the Palast's endeavours to further acquire revue aesthetics. At this theatre, notions of East German cultural practice were translated into stage processes not solely via the body, but via technology and the use of the stage's space. The Palast's new technological capabilities were mainly new mechanical, hydraulic, and electronically controlled systems. Parts of these systems were visible on stage as quasi-actors; for example, the water pool was part of the under-stage machinery of the apron stage, which involved hydrostatic systems of motion control, systems of automation, other systems that supervised the water temperature and cleanness. All that was visible, though, was the round pool equipped with glass-windows and light-blue tiles inside. These quasi-actors embodied 'the inherent assumptions and deliberate desires of those who commission, design, manufacture, and/or deploy them' (Stokes, 2000:197). In this chapter, I understand technologies as giving information about ways of doing and hence as an indicator of how Marxist thinking of acquisition and appropriation manifested itself through practice. Technology thus channelled human capabilities and through them also a certain degree of creative autonomy, that is, a capacity to adapt behaviour to changing material circumstances. In this chapter, technology is thus understood as helping to restore the Palast's revue behaviour as a form of a new forward-thrusting material reality. The ways in which this technology was put to use in order to match the Palast's aesthetic endeavours thus reflected the socialist society's technological

³ For the relation between technological determinism and culture, see Marx and Smith, 1998.

competence at large. In the new theatre, the staging and implementation of the technology into the structure of a revue was thus shaped by both ideological conditions and institutional practices.

The East German technological thinking was rooted in the ideology's prospective consciousness, but was, at the same time, restricted by the fact that its tangible materiality did not only express a desire for future developments, but was the exhibition of an actual material futurity that had already manifested itself in the here and now. To employ technologically advanced machines created a surface effect that Augustine termed 'gratification postponement' (2009:225), by which she understands the immediate effect of an East German technophilia. The country's new technologies already represented a desired near future; they were part of the desired future materialised already in the here and now. In this way, Augustine argues, technology's futuristic potential created cultural effects that were a partial substitute for political participation and were therefore meant to impart faith in a political system that had to constantly prove its *raison d'être* in the face of the Western dream machines, such as the theatrical entertainments of Broadway and Las Vegas or the music and motion picture industry of Hollywood, together with its glamorous commercial imaginary, and the pressures they exerted onto the socialist system. The Palast's technological practice was thus about restructuring East German cultural values through the belief of being technologically superior. Whether or not that was true did not matter, as technology was interpreted in East German cultural contexts: just as socialist modernity was an interpretation of modernity through the means of what socialism had provided thus far, socialist technology was understood in relation to national developments.

Within the scope of the technological history of the GDR, the new Friedrichstadt-Palast is an example of what Raymond Stokes defines as a 'mission-oriented technology strategy' (2000:176) that structured the development of the socialist country during the 1980s. These selective processes of technological development 'emphasized single-minded pursuit of the technological cutting edge' (ibid) and encompassed research and development activities, for instance, into laser technologies and space optics (ibid:5). The stage technological systems for the new Palast were mainly delivered by the prime contractor

VEB Sächsischer Brücken- und Stahlhochbau Dresden (SBS)⁴, a company based in Dresden that once specialised in the casting of iron.⁵ Since 1912, the SBS had been working in the sector of stage technology and systems of remote automation, and was thus deemed the most fitting contractor for the new Friedrichstadt-Palast (Kohl, n.d.: [online]). In a very material way, the Palast thus exploited the legacy of this culturally important company and acquired parts of its reputation through this historical lineage. These technological strategies—achieving ideological superiority through technological pioneering and a mission-oriented implementation of this striving—frame the rebuilding of the theatre as a typical product of the 1980s.

To tell the story of the new Palast through the lens of technology also requires defining what technological progress meant in relation to socialist performance practice. ‘Boldly Going Where No Socialism Has Gone Before!’ (2009: 225), as Augustine ironically put it, did not only mean going forward. The technologies’ forward-thrusting surface effects were understood through the Palast’s acquiring and backwards-looping practices of performance restoration that have already begun to be detailed in the previous chapters. As I will demonstrate as this chapter continues, the main argument for the Palast’s rebuilding was to acquire the technological past of the Berlin revue, i.e. the Friedrichstadt-Palast’s classical heritage. In relation to processes of Marxist cultural acquisition and appropriation, technology offered a way of going back in time, of looping back to the socialist revue of the old Friedrichstadt-Palast and even to the revue practices of 1920s Weimar Berlin. A booklet on the Palast’s rebuilding published by the Bauakademie der DDR, the GDR’s building academy, specified these cultural requirements of technology:

The stage’s dimensions, the technical equipment, and special facilities allow for bringing back the full artistic range of the variety and revue arts. The new Palast’s stage is thus

⁴ The electrical fixtures were provided by their subcontractors VEB Starkstromanlagenbau Leipzig-Halle and Kombinat Orsta-Hydraulik Leipzig. (Baudirektion, 1984:34)

⁵ The SBS, which before the expropriations of post-war Germany was called Kelle & Hildebrandt, was a renowned provider of steelwork for bridges, machines, and the military complex during the Second World War. During the GDR, the company was an important part of the country’s export sector. Since reunification, it has belonged to the global leaders of stage technology providers, now called SBS Bühnentechnik GmbH (SBS Bühnentechnik GmbH, (n.d.): [online]). It was also the principal contractor for the overhaul of the Royal Opera House, London in 1997-1999, and is currently the principal contractor in the major overhaul of the Staatsoper Berlin, which is set to conclude in 2017.

capable of continuing the good old traditions of the revue theatre of the nineteen twenties, like that of the 'Wintergarten', 'Scala', 'Plaza'. (Baudirektion, 1984:8).⁶

Technology therefore fulfilled a dialectical function that I will call 'techno-futurism'. The term both engages with the promises of technology in the GDR and at the same time returns to its past; it combines both the forward-thrusting and backward-looking qualities of the Palast's technological thinking. The prefix 'techno-' indicates the dominant narrative of technology as pioneering, hence of technology as being an imperative of progress. Defining the term 'futurism' always involves negotiating the dialectics of progression. Dialectically, advancements always already 'include their ties to their own preconditions and future possibilities as well as to whatever is affecting them (and whatever they are affecting) right now' (Ollman, 2003:4). The Palast's stage practices as modes of performance reconstruction, that is, as a means of going back to shape the institutions' socialist future, are thus expressions of technology's dialectical futurism. In other words, thinking about East German theatre technology in terms of 'techno-futurism' helps us to imagine how the Palast meant to acquire the theatre's technological past. The case-studies in this chapter help to qualify the nuances of the Palast's techno-futurism with regards to its institutional history, its stage practices, and the pressures that the state exerted on the institution.

I use the concept of 'techno-futurism' to continue my argument that many of the Palast's operations were in fact shaped bottom-up as aesthetic projects that were in alliance with Marxist cultural processes, as opposed to having solely been shaped top-down in terms of the Party's ideology. However, both the dominant political periodisation of the GDR and the cultural policies of the early 1980s led to the perception of the new theatre as having been a Party project. During the late 1970s and the early 1980s, the arts were governed by a 'fluster of threats and concessions that created a climate of confusion' (Jäger, 1995: 187). The most severe incident involved songwriter and poet Wolf Biermann who had been expelled by the GDR government on 6 November 1976 after he had become an open critic of the socialist system in his works.⁷ A few years later, the tension between institutional and alternative arts became evermore evident. Seen from

⁶ 'Die Gesamtbühne in ihrer Größe, Breite und Tiefe sowie mit allen technischen Ausrüstungen und Spezialeinrichtungen ermöglicht es, wieder alle künstlerischen Darbietungen der Varieté- und Revuekunst zum Einsatz zu bringen. Der neue Friedrichstadtpalast ist damit bühnentechnisch in der Lage, die guten Traditionen der Revuetheater der zwanziger Jahre wie "Wintergarten", "Scala", "Plaza" weiterzuführen.'

⁷ On Biermann's expatriation and the ensuing changes in cultural policy, see Jäger, 1995:163-186.

a top-down perspective, the eighties were effectively about suppressing these new counter-cultures that were in part driven by so-called *Reformsozialisten* ('reform socialists'), who believed in an alternative, more participatory form of socialism.⁸ The political situation of the 1980s, which was characterised by an increasing disillusionment in the incapability of the government to allow for a more multivocal discourse in society, has shaped how the new Friedrichstadt-Palast as an East German product is remembered today. The theatre is still seen as having been the government's attempt to calm the waves of their restrictive politics by showing its goodwill towards entertainment cultures. According to the West German weekly news magazine DER SPIEGEL, the decision for the new theatre was made during the Tenth Party Conference in April 1981,⁹ fourteen and a half months after the old theatre's closing, and by 1984 its 'instructions were carried out and the state leadership's mission fulfilled – the object was finished' (n.a., 1984:196)¹⁰. This narrative expresses a centrally organised rebuilding whose processes were led by the Party and of the highest efficiency. The East German newspapers told a similar story where the new Friedrichstadt-Palast was the Party's gift to the people and represented socialist productivity: 'Decided and built' (Plog, 1984:15)¹¹, was the headline in *Wochenpost*. Scholar Florian Urban also embeds this timeframe politically because, as mentioned above, 'the socialist rulers of East Germany attempted one last time to raise the popularity of their increasingly unloved regime by commissioning a building dedicated to light-hearted amusement' (Urban, 2015:219). He tells this story by predominantly relying on Stasi files, thus rendering history from the point of view of the secret service and the Party, who problematised incidents like the rebuilding of the Palast to further assert their power. Although he does not specify how the new

⁸ This thinking is rooted in generational conflicts. The generation of the reform socialists did not have first-hand experience of the Second World War and therefore believed in a more humane form of socialism, in which memories of the war did not justify systems of oppression (see Emmerich, 2007: 276).

⁹ According to the booklet of the Baudirektion, this process started by developing studies about the object after the closure of the old theatre in 1980 (Baudirektion, 1984:34).

¹⁰ 'Der Beschluß vom X. Parteitag sei befolgt und der Auftrag der Staatsführung erfüllt - das Objekt sei fertiggestellt.'

¹¹ 'Beschlissen und gebaut!'

theatre influenced the institution's revue practice, this development was nonetheless framed by party ideology and, after all, funded by them.¹²

While this narrative is historically correct, the development of the Palast's performance practice still differs from this predominantly political reading. In fact, the rebuilding of the Palast offers a way of understanding the faltering cultural practices in East Germany by opening up another way of thinking about Marxist cultural processes as being linked to changing material realities. The new technology was a means of structuring hope for artists that kept practicing when socialist ways of meaning-making were thought to stagger.¹³ The new theatre was thus a medium through which revue makers were able to diversify their cultural practices. In this context, the new Palast can also be seen as a rather atypical product of the crisis-ridden 1980s: while it continued its line of thinking in Marxist cultural paradigms, it still entered completely new ways of doing revue that had formerly not been possible. The history of the new Friedrichstadt-Palast is not only the history of a building, but rather about what this new building enabled the theatre makers to do on its stage and how, by thinking through practice, the new building was formed. Contrary to the official, that is, political periodisation of the rebuilding, archival documents show that the Palast started to re-think its practices in terms of new stage technologies when the old theatre was meant to be overhauled in the early 1970s. This implies that the technological thinking that constituted the new Palast emerged long before the old theatre was forced to close. Underlying the argument that follows in the penultimate section of this chapter ('A Socialist Total Theatre') is the idea that the rebuilding of the Palast involved far more than usual Party business: it was an exploration led by the institution about what it needed to advance its understanding of the socialist revue. This is why, in the narrative of this chapter, the new theatre is first discussed as a form of doing. Towards the end of the chapter, this view is extended to a discussion of the theatre's built form: the theatre as a material manifestation of continuing practice. By the end of the 1980s, the cultural practices

¹² During a Politburo meeting on 29 January 1980, State Secretary for Construction, Karl-Heinz Martini proposed a bill to rebuilt the Friedrichstadt-Palast. In order to proceed with this project quickly, he proposed it as part of the Housing Program (Urban, 2009, p.135, footnote 28), which encompassed the renovation of roughly 1m apartments for about 3m people (Giersdorf, 2013:113).

¹³ For resistive motions in the GDR's dance world during the 1980s, see Giersdorf, 2013, 85-130.

of acquisition and appropriation had shaped the revue's full mise-en-scène and even the theatre's architecture in a desire to revise stage practices for a socialist future.

3.1. Techno-futurism premieres during *Premiere: Friedrichstraße 107* (1984)

Premiere: Friedrichstraße 107 (82 performances; Friedrichstadt-Palast, 1984e:1) was the first revue to make use of the new theatre space.¹⁴ When the revue makers (directors Wolfgang E. Struck and Volkmar Neumann) imagined the new stage technologies as a form of reconstructing revue behaviour, they had not been exposed to the actual technology and their functioning: the show represented the outcome of roughly eight years of conceptual, architectural, and creative development that preceded its staging and that set the discursive groundwork for staging revues in a highly technologized stage environment.¹⁵ While the theatre was being built, a first concept for the inaugural revue argued the best form would be a 'variety programme to present the great technological possibilities to the audience' (Friedrichstadt-Palast, 1982:1)¹⁶. In 1982, the title for the show was originally meant to be *Das hat Berlin noch nicht gesehen* ('Berlin has never seen this before').¹⁷ Although this title articulates the uniqueness of the new theatre by expressing a degree of novelty, it also refers back to the theatre's performance history and to the title of the 1961 revue *Das hat Berlin schon mal gesehen* ('Berlin has seen it before', see chapter 1), thus assuring audiences that this newness happened within the frame of shared cultural practices. While the 1961 show specifically aimed at acquiring Berlin's vernacular entertainment vocabulary, the 1982 concept was about 'a theatre, fitted to stage revues with such technological capabilities that have previously not existed in Berlin' (ibid)¹⁸; it focused on revue

¹⁴ The ensemble kept performing during the time of the theatre's closure and the old theatre's stage was still used as a rehearsal space. Between February 1980 and April 1984, the Palast ensemble toured 24 shows through the GDR and internationally, and performed 500 times (Struck, 1984:9).

¹⁵ This figure is an approximation that I derived from the time that the Palast's revue makers had actively thought about a new technological setup of a potentially new theatre. I will expand on this time in the penultimate section of this chapter.

¹⁶ 'Der künstlerische Inhalt dieser Revue wird sich in einem gebundenen Nummernprogramm, die großen technischen Variationen des Hauses dem Publikum zu offerieren, niederschlagen.'

¹⁷ This is the show's final title. Starting in 1982, there were different names for this show; all concepts were based on the idea of anchoring the new Palast in the cultural fabric of Berlin. The other titles were *Berlin, Berlin* (1983), *Berlin hat uns wieder* ('We are back in Berlin', 1983), *Berlin, du hast uns wieder* ('Berlin, you have us back', 1983).

¹⁸ '[...], daß ein Haus mit solchen technischen Möglichkeiten für die Gestaltung einer Revue in Berlin bis dahin noch nicht existiert hat.'

performance's dissimilarities rather than its similarities, thus inducing a break from the past instead of a continuation.

These dissimilarities also refer to the theatre's changing production-related circumstances, which also underlie the discussion in this section. Although the directors Wolfgang E. Struck and Volkmar Neumann had at their disposal the most advanced theatrical apparatus of the GDR, they devised new stage processes from the frame of reference of the old one. When the ballet moved into the new theatre on 1 February 1984 (10 weeks before the premiere), the rehearsals also began for both the performers and the tech teams.¹⁹ For the tech teams, these primarily included running in the new machinery and finding solutions to various challenges that were posed by the revue's performance concept and that are explored in this chapter. In the new theatre, technology had become an active collaborator in the conceiving of revue programmes that required as much attention as the bodies that the new equipment shared a space with. The shifting production approach was reflected in rising numbers of the staff that operated the theatre's technology: the number had risen from 106 in the old theatre to approximately 250 in the new (Friedrichstadt-Palast, 1984a:2).²⁰ All operations on the stage and its machineries were overseen by people responsible for the building management system. Image 3.02 shows the main moving parts of the stage and their capabilities of automated movement: new electrical engineers were needed to oversee the technological infrastructure of the electrical remote-control systems, hydraulic engineers operated the apron stage lift and the movable pool and ice arena, other engineers for the stage machineries operated the movable stage platforms and new flying facilities, and sound engineers oversaw the acoustics of the new space. Although the audience only saw parts of this system, the new revue meant to showcase all of the automated and mechanised movements that were possible within this new space.

¹⁹ The technical installations were tested by engineers from November 1983 and then handed over to the creative team in early 1984.

²⁰ In terms of staff, the theatre's administration had the lowest increase from 24 to 33 posts. The theatre's SED grassroots organisation was enhanced from 30 to 60 members (Friedrichstadt-Palast, 1984b:2). According to the theatre's conception, the following posts were to be given to grassroots members: senior head of the department of building services, safety inspector, 8 porters, head of the workshops, musical dramaturg, as well as further support in the theatre technology department. Since these posts had to report to the Party directly, these areas can be expected to have played by party rules.

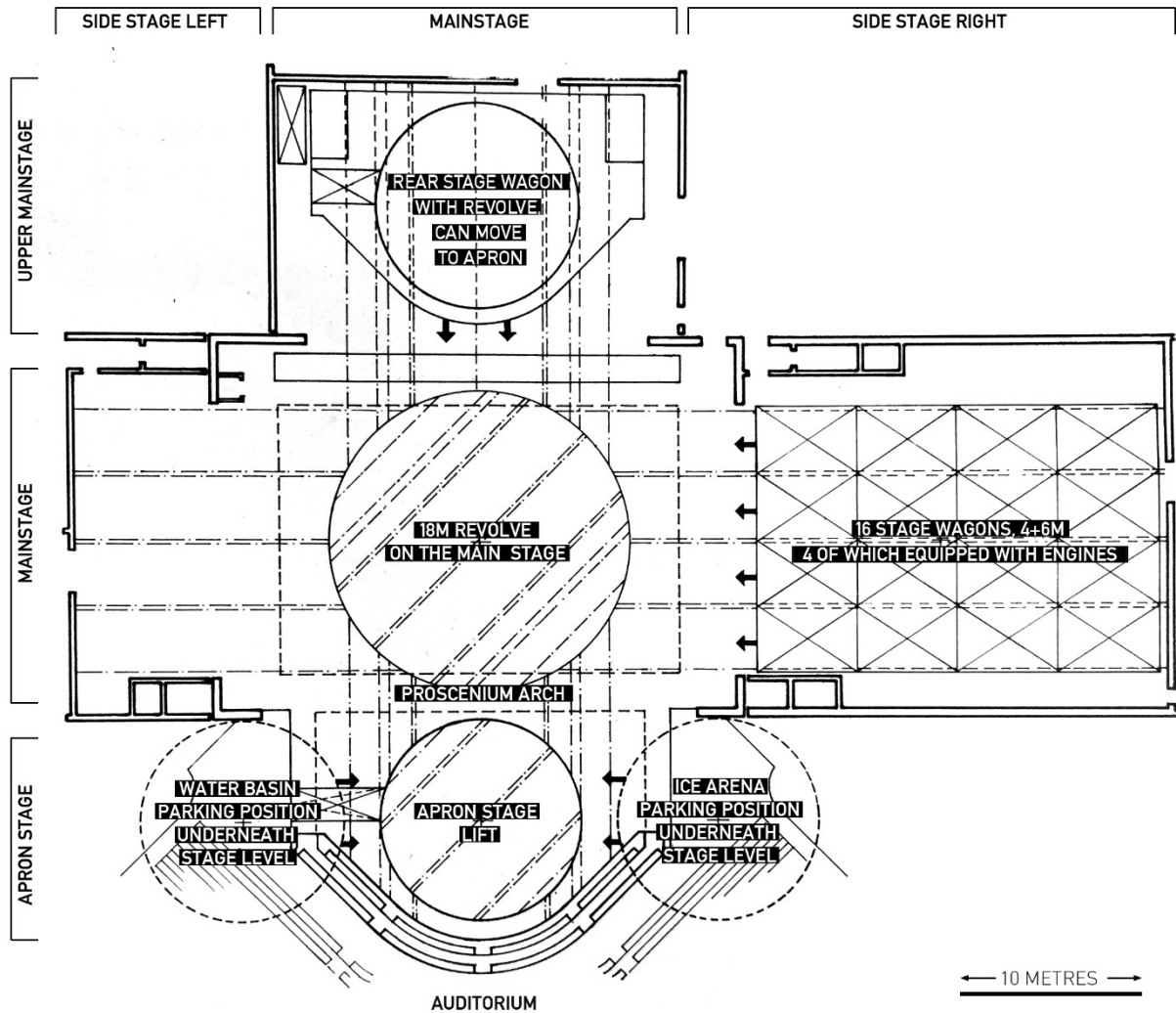


IMAGE 3.02. The stage layout of the new Friedrichstadt-Palast. Schematic top view of the stage space at the time of the inauguration. In the German system, the side stages are named according to the view from the auditorium. The stage wagons on side stage right have been dismantled and nowadays provide storage space for movable set pieces.

The advanced technology also increased the production's timescales: while in the nineteen-seventies, a new revue was usually choreographed, rehearsed, and designed in roughly four weeks, the new stage required much more time to realise the increasingly complex performance concepts and procedures. Nowadays, by comparison, a new show requires more than two years of planning, pre-production, and space conversion before the dry techs and stage rehearsals can start. In the time leading up to the stage rehearsals in February and March 1984, the theatre's technological systems had only existed in the makers' imagination and were pictured in terms of the institution's performance practice, which in turn led to certain assumptions about the new technology that in fact corresponded to old patterns. Although the concept of *Premiere: Friedrichstraße 107* indicates attempts to accentuate the forward-thinking and pioneering elements

of the new stage's technological capabilities, the show offered a very familiar style of revue that returning audiences had known well from the old Friedrichstadt-Palast: the ordinary functional tableaux—like the opening, the song blocks,²¹ the exotic tableau, the ensemble number before the intermission, the kick line tableau, several artistic performances, and the finale —were in place as they usually would be in a Palast potpourri revue. The differences from what the Palast had done in the past were in the stage processes by which the new space was revealed, structured, and changed.

Although this setup could be assumed to have functioned as a theatre of illusion, it reconstructed revue behaviour in relation to making techno-futurist statements, which meant that the processes by which technology was employed had to be as comprehensible as possible: to show technological progress involved staging motion as a dialectics of space.

3.1.1. Directing the dialectics of techno-futurism

Elements of the theatrical apparatus were not only operated, but their operation was visibly and consciously staged. In the first tableau, this predominantly concerned the operation of the safety curtain and the white sequin curtain (coined 'revue curtain'²² in the prompt book; Friedrichstadt-Palast, 1984c:16A) that divided the apron from the main stage. The safety curtain covered the whole of the proscenium arch, i.e. 24m in width and 11m in height. It was lifted during the show's opening and was accompanied by a fanfare (composed by the Palast's chief arranger Hans Bath). Usually, the safety curtain is already lifted when the audience walks into the auditorium. For this first revue, the makers decided to show this otherwise hidden process and even make it a part of the first show, teaching the audience from the first moment how different kinds of movement altered habits of watching a Friedrichstadt-Palast revue. The rising safety curtain cleared the view for the revue curtain, whose sequins covered the whole area underneath the proscenium arch and were made to glimmer by employing 'light effects' (ibid)²³. The curtain ran on rubber wheels. The velocity

²¹ There were four blocks of song presentations in this revue. The first was presented by singer Dagmar Frederic and welcomed the ensemble in its new home and the Friedrichstadt-Palast back in Berlin, the second block was presented by Eva Maria Pieckert and was called *Von Piano bis Forte*, the third one taken in turns by international stars, like Karel Gott or Sacha Diestel, the fourth one was presented by East German comedienne Helga Hahnemann, was entitled 'Berlin und icke' (Berlin and I), and presented Berlin vernacular songs and Schlager.

²² 'Revuevorhang'

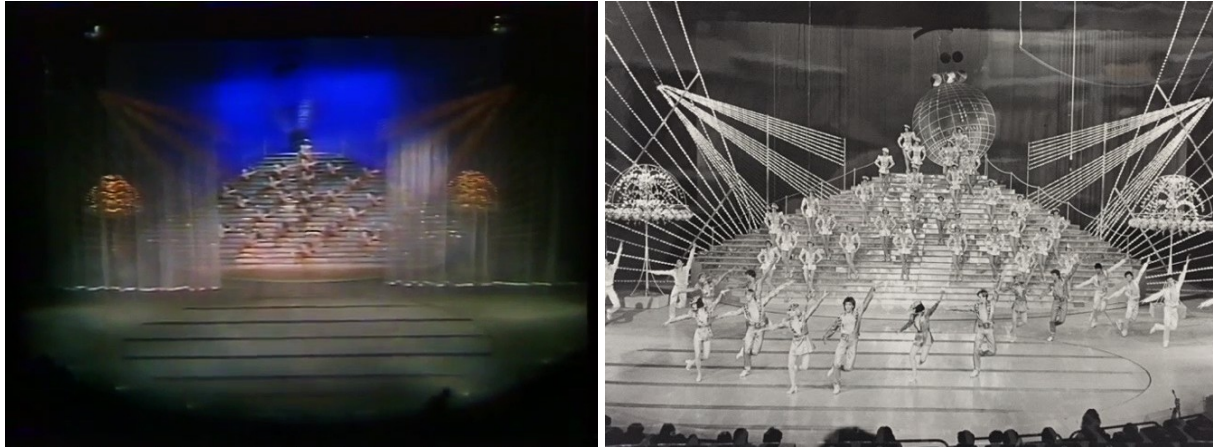
²³ 'Effektlicht'

of its movement was adjustable between 0.15 and 1.5 meters per second with the help of an electrified wire rope hoist (Baudirektion, 1984:31). At its maximum velocity, the curtain could thus reveal the entire main stage space in roughly ten seconds. Since the curtain opened from the middle and each side travelled for about 13m, there was an overlap of a higher opacity at the middle of the stage. This process—first, the raising of the safety curtain, then the opening of the double-layered mid-section of the revue curtain to finally grant a clear view onto the new stage—structured the stage time and the audience had to wait for this demonstration to be finished before the next action happened. Such a sequence of overlaying movement, light effects, and the revelation of bodies had not been possible in the old theatre; it formed a spectacle by revealing the capabilities of the new stage.

The stage's means were uncovered, layer by layer, curtain by curtain, while ephemeral layers were added, like sound and light. The light effects, while they made the revue curtain glimmer and shine, also shone through the curtain, starting to reveal the scenery behind it: 'the tableau is governed by a staircase that narrows from the bottom up, 4m high and taking almost the whole width of the stage' (Friedrichstadt-Palast, 1984c:22A)²⁴. The contours of the Berlin TV tower became visible behind the silvery revue staircase and the main stage resembled the tower's entrance pavilion on Alexanderplatz (image 3.03). The staircase was framed by acrylic glass trees with lighting elements inside them. While the light-emitting scenographic elements shone through the glittering curtain, the revue curtain itself opened from the middle and revealed the whole stage. The female half of the ensemble sat on the staircase, ordered in diagonal tiers, and now started to stand up and begin their sequence of steps. More dancers joined as the scene went on (image 3.04). In the understanding of the Palast, 'the tableau in white and silver (in front of a white cyclorama), into which the ballet's costumes of the same colour combinations organically integrate, expresses in a revue-typical style the modern flair of the capital city' (ibid)²⁵.

²⁴ 'Das klare, helle und großzügig disponierte Bild wird bestimmt durch eine zentrale, 4 m hohe und fast die gesamte Bühnenbreite einnehmende, sich nach oben symmetrisch verjüngende Treppe'

²⁵ 'Das Bild in Weiß und Silber (vor weißem Rundhorizont), dem sich die Kostüme des Ballets im gleichen Farbakord organisch einfügen, atmet auf revuespezifisch stilisierte Weise etwas vom modernen Flair der Hauptstadt.'



IMAGES 3.03-04. Premiere: Friedrichstraße 107 (1984). 3.03: 'Frühling in Berlin'. TV tower of Alexanderplatz and lighting elements behind the opening revue curtain. 3.04: 'Frühling in Berlin'. Revue staircase resembling the entry pavilions of the TV tower.

The visual language of this tableau was imbued with technological references and evoked more than just a revue-esque reimagination of Berlin. Together with the light-emitting elements on the stage, the Sputnik-shaped²⁶ top of the TV tower, and the silvery elements of the revue stair, there was an air of space travel, evoking loose correlations between technology, science, and progress; all were part of the public imaginary of the time. In fact, six years before this revue, the first German in space was Sigmund Jähn, an East German cosmonaut and member of the Soviet-led Soyuz 31 programme (Augustine, 2007:208). A live telecast of Jähn's space expedition celebrated the winner of the inner-German space race and created a part of national memory that was, like the new Palast itself, founded on the idea of technological advancement. The connection between the curtain opening and that which it revealed told a story of a technologically potent theatre and an abstract reimagination of a (cosmonautical) Berlin that was deemed to be present-day. Granted, a moving curtain can by far not be considered a novelty, but a curtain operating smoothly to reveal the 24m wide proscenium and the largest stage area in the GDR, while its movement caused effects of glitter and glimmer, created a narrative of progress that embraced the audience and pulled them into a spectacle that was based in a national and institutional identity. The staging ensured that it was seen as a sequence of interrelations.

²⁶ Sputnik 1 was the first artificial satellite to go into orbit. Launched by the Russians on 4 October 1957, the ensuing era was shaped by the perception that 'the stars no longer seemed out of reach' (Augustine, 2007:113) and has inspired a new perspective on productivity and progress.

The Palast made explicit the creative processes of how technology and its surrogates added to the meaning-making processes of this moment in the revue. The 1984 repertoire proposal introduced *Premiere: Friedrichstraße 107* as a 'Fabel that offers to the audience the great, technological possibilities of the theatre' (Friedrichstadt-Palast, 1983a:3)²⁷. Fabel²⁸ is a term that was frequently used when reviewers or contributors of the *Artistik* magazine described the meaning that dance in entertainment theatres was meant to convey. In his discussion on show dance, Werner Gommlich, for instance, used the term Fabel to argue that the artistic experience depends on the ways in which an event that contains a particular insight, or message, is portrayed (1989:15-6)²⁹. In other words, a Fabel contains a sequence of interactions that describe in a dialectical manner the relations of the actors involved. In this respect, it is quite phenomenal that practitioners at the Palast continued to use a concept that had already been used to fathom dance, but was now applied to something that sits outside the body. This usage might suggest that technology was understood as having performative qualities as well and that technology was an actor within socialist performance practice.

The repertoire proposal states that '[b]y Fabel we mean that the technological capabilities should not simply be presented, but dressed in an artistic guise, therefore becoming a function of the revue's dramaturgical structure' (Friedrichstadt-Palast, 1983:3)³⁰. This evidences that the Fabel became the Palast's method to stage an 'idea'. Fabel in this chapter describes the dialectical relation of the present socialist society to its heritage, which the Palast told as an empirical study that created a world view, and that underpinned all narratives and other meaning-making processes on the stage. When they said, 'technological capabilities...becoming a function of the revue', they meant that specific abilities to configure space become convenient to the dramaturgies of acquiring historic revue vocabulary, which I described in chapter 1. The Fabel of *Premiere: Friedrichstraße 107* was not about telling the story of a cosmonautical Berlin, but in fact

²⁷ 'in einer gespielten Fabel die großen technischen Möglichkeiten des Hauses dem Publikum zu offerieren'

²⁸ In theatre studies, *Fabel* is usually mentioned in relation to Brecht and his epic theatre. In his sense, the *Fabel* is the 'plot of the play told as a sequence of interactions, describing each event in the dialectical fashion developed by Hegel, Marx' (Weber, 1994:189). As a *Fabel*, these 'synthetic (*zurechtgemacht*) processes express the ideas of the Fabel inventor (*Fabelfinder*),' (Brecht, 1993:292). See also White, 2004:220-231.

²⁹ 'Das Kunsterlebnis wird relativ stark vom Erkenntnisgehalt, der ihm innenwohnt, also der Fabel, dem Geschehen, bestimmt,....'

³⁰ 'Mit solch einer Fabel ist gemeint, daß diese technischen Möglichkeiten nicht schlechthin vorgeführt, sondern in ein künstlerisches Gewand gekleidet und demzufolge dramaturgisch zwingend in die Revue einfunktioniert werden.'

entailed the Palast's own view on what I described as 'techno-futurism', which entailed showcasing the new facilities as a means of redoing revue performances. Consequently, the revue consisted not only of one Fabel of techno-futurism, but of many variations, which were explored in the revue's tableaux.

This techno-dramaturgical thinking is in fact linked to the theatre's changing means of production. In 1976, when the Palast was still performing in the old building, theatre dramaturg and journalist Martin Linzer wrote a piece for *Unterhaltungskunst* magazine about the creative development of the Palast and mourned the lack of a Fabel as stage practice:

It appears to me that the terpsichorean revues, whose conceptual foundation is not a "Fabel" (in terms of theatre dramaturgy) but ideally a programme "idea", lack binding aesthetic-dramaturgical regularities, because they are only a combination of different genres of the entertainment arts (and maybe therefore we should talk about a synthetic genre). (1976:4)³¹

Linzer contrasts the Fabel as a directorial practice with the revue's basic patchwork characteristic by indicating what the average Palast revue had so far lacked. A few months later, during the artistic development conference (as described in chapter 1 and 2), the Palast's chief dramaturg Wolfgang Tilgner analysed why they had not satisfactorily produced such Fabels as an expression of a dialectical stage practice. Primarily, Tilgner asserts, this was due to the Palast having tried to establish a canon of reproducible entities that created a recognition value for the new socialist revue, which could thus be regarded as 'artistically valuable' (Tilgner, 1976:39)³². Whereas Linzer continued to understand stage practice in very literary terms (which I have outlined as the official way of understanding socialist art in chapter 1 and 2), Tilgner, although he was a dramaturg, tried to discuss the Palast's art form in terms of practice and forms of meaning making that operated beyond the expression of a literary theme. Revue, according to Tilgner, was still 'caught up in the preforms of the scenic realisation' (1976:57)³³, because the individual parts that formed the whole were not understood as dialectical, but only as referring to its own past. But, as Tilgner stated, artistic 'progress in the entertainment arts cannot be measured on the basis of new repertoire only. New additions to the

³¹ 'Für die musikalisch-tänzerische Revue, deren konzeptionelle Grundlage keine "Fabel" (im Sinne der Theater-Dramaturgie) ist, sondern bestenfalls eine Programm-"Idee", scheinen mir verbindliche ästhetisch-dramaturgische Gesetzmäßigkeiten schwer zu formulieren, da ihre Besonderheit in der Mischung und Kombination verschiedenster Genres der Unterhaltungskunst liegt (vielleicht sollte man von einem "synthetischen" Genre sprechen).'

³² 'künstlerisch wertvoll'

³³ 'An diese Vorformen des Szenischen klebt die Unterhaltungskunst, die Revue.'

repertoire are self-evident. Entertainment is always already contemporary art.’ (ibid:20)³⁴. Tilgner notes that the prevalent idea of the revue as something of the past existed because both the genre of the revue and the materiality of the theatre building itself stemmed from the past, even though the Palast had tried to acquire and appropriate, thus to overcome, that past. During the pre-technological Palast-modernity before 1980, Tilgner described the function of stage technology as to ‘help realise directorial ideas, even to evoke them. Considering this aspect of technology, the Friedrichstadt-Palast is admittedly not antediluvial, but we have never gotten much further than the discovery of electricity’ (ibid:60)³⁵. Now, in 1984, and with the help of a *Volltheater* the revue practitioners could start exploring the dialectical relationship between old revue practices and their modern means of production.

To stage technological futurism as a Fabel encompassed seeing the changing of space as an achievement of new automation capacities. This is also the moment that distinguishes the Fabel for the ‘idea’ that I discussed in chapter 1. In contrast to the ‘idea’, a Fabel was dialectical. While an ‘idea’, although it was meant to be organising and constitutive, conveyed a cultural understanding of a theme or a topic as narrative, only a Fabel would focus on the stage processes, the distribution of space, and the employment of automated means in order to convey its inherent dialectics. For a stage process to be regarded as Fabel, it must help in exploring the backward-looking qualities of techno-futurism. When re-examining the opening tableau as a Fabel of techno-futurism, one realizes that the raising of the safety curtain, the opening of the revue curtain, and the revelation of the dancers and sets behind it are not particularly new processes. The old Friedrichstadt-Palast had a safety curtain, sequin curtains, and a large stage area (although it was smaller than the new space). Cultural acquisition does not primarily entail the provision of new moments, but how known moments are appropriated, thus done differently. Seen in the light of techno-futurism, the opening rendered a new version of a functional moment that audiences expected: the ensemble acquired the revue extravaganza’s aesthetic vocabulary and artistically shaped a contemporary response to its own

³⁴ ‘Dieser [künstlerische] Fortschritt erschöpft sich keineswegs im Repertoire. Das neue Repertoire ist selbstverständlich. Unterhaltungskunst ist immer zeitgenössische Kunst.’

³⁵ ‘Technik sollte die Einfälle der Regisseure nicht nur ermöglichen, sondern hervorrufen helfen. Wenn man diese Aufgabe der Technik bedenkt, dann ist die Lage im FP [Friedrichstadtpalast] zwar nicht mehr vorsintflutlich, aber viel weiter als über die Entdeckung der Elektrizität sind wir nicht hinausgelangt.’

historical practices through technology. Presenting the staircase in the first tableau also already set the benchmark for reading the remainder of the show in the terms of a revue extravaganza that does things differently. In the classical revue, ‘the climax was always the staircase tableau’ (Klooss & Reuter, 1980:36)³⁶ and ‘[t]he staircase is the prop that staged the semblance (...) of a luxurious life in combination of technical perfection of a seemingly rationalised world’ (ibid)³⁷. Starting the revue with what was deemed the climax poses the question of what the climax of this show might be, rendering the classical revue vocabulary only a starting point, not the destination of the new Palast’s practices. *Premiere: Friedrichstraße 107* was quoting an environmental structure, but it was not going back in time. By having made the end a beginning, the structure of this revue expressed the start of a new era, that is, a new periodisation of revue practice that was meant to commence with the new theatre: starting with the end meant that the only way to go was forward, into new creative territory. In this first tableau, the Palast did not represent the old Friedrichstadt-Palast, but provided an empirical study of how the stage’s means showed technological doing and thus appropriated the revue’s heritage.

3.1.2. The logistics of going forward

The second half of *Premiere: Friedrichstraße 107* included the tableau ‘Kontraste’ that was meant to marry the new stage fittings of the apron and main stage to the embodied practices of the Palast ensemble. In the prompt book, this tableau is described as a ‘multi-part ballet tableau during which the Friedrichstadt-Palast’s ballet company dances to musically modern stylistic elements. It gains momentum by employing the technological novelties’ (Friedrichstadt-Palast, 1984c:110)³⁸. The tableau consisted of four sections: ‘Laser in Action’ (a dance during a laser show), ‘Erotica’ (topless revue girls dance a story of revealing and showing off by using feather fans), ‘Pop auf Eis’ (an ice skating ballet), and ‘Ballett-Rotationen’ (a ballet conclusion

³⁶ ‘Höhepunkt der Revue ist immer das große Treppentableau.’

³⁷ ‘Die Treppe ist das Requisit, mit dessen Hilfe der Schein luuriösen Lebens und die technische Perfektion einer vermeintlich rationalisierten Welt in Szene gesetzt wird.’

³⁸ ‘Ein mehrteiliges Ballettbild, in dem sich das Ballett des Friedrichstadtpalastes in einem Tanzkomplex mit musikalisch und tänzerisch modernen Stilelementen vorstellt, gewinnt zusätzliche Attraktivität durch die Nutzung technischer Neuheiten.’

accompanied by automated stage lighting). All of these contrasts, except 'Erotica', involved complex systems of technology whose deployment was framed by demands on quality and seamlessness.

Although the analysis of this tableau will focus on technological aspects, I want to proceed to the function of female bodies in the interpretation of techno-futurist Fabels. A recurring theme in this revue is the interpretation of a techno-futurist statement through female bodies in order to relate elegance with technical procedures. The inclusion of 'Erotica', a female semi-nude dance with fans, works in alliance with a conventionally gendered narrative of male technological prowess and progression, when it could also be read as a way of embedding the new fixtures in the revue's female-gendered historical past. In performance, the narratives of progress and technological advancements were mostly conveyed through female bodies. It is noticeable that automated motions of new parts are quite often accompanied by female performers. Especially transitions, which, in order to express technological prowess, should be read as fluid processes, became accompanied by females. Fluidity thus became a trope for technological advancement. Female bodies seemed to impart this notion, even if some of the processes were over-ambitiously imagined by the directors and, as I will point out, actually failed to show technological excellence. In that respect, the Fabel of techno-futurism was determined by the directors' ability to form stage processes during the process of staging, but was at the same time accomplished by the female bodies of the revue.



IMAGES 3.05-06. The technologies of the transitioning conférence. 3.05: 'Die Heitere Muse' in the auditorium flying track. **3.06:** O.F. Weidling in the 'Heitere Muse'.

The first section of 'Kontraste', 'Action in Laser', was meant to draw attention to the new voluminous space. The new theatre did not possess an orchestra pit: the first row of seating immediately touched the apron, and the large proscenium arch visually coalesced the space of the auditorium and the main stage into one immense action space. For that matter, the section was opened by a display of

oppositional directionality: six female dancers were lowered from above the main stage on point hoists while twelve male dancers entered via the side stages. In this opening, female bodies were used to emphasise the elegance of technological smoothness. The dancers' entries on point hoists prepared the audience to look into a space that normally would not be occupied by bodies or objects, but through these bodies, they were convinced to appreciate the scale of the stage.

By this point in the show, the audience had already learnt how to read the voluminous stage space, i.e. the space above stage level. During the show's first *conférence* after the revue's opening, comedian and *conférencier* Otto Franz Weidling (known as O. F.) explicitly drew the audience's attention to his unusual entrance: he appeared in the left aerial flying track, whose rails, hidden in the plastered ceiling, led from the back of the auditorium above the people's heads to right over the apron. With the help of wirework and a motor, the attached object could be lowered onto the stage. His flying device was shaped as a figurehead, dubbed '*Heitere Muse*' ('light muse', image 3.06) (Friedrichstadt-Palast, 1984c:29A) in the prompt book. A play on words—the *heitere Muse* as the East German word for light entertainment was personified as a bare-breasted figurehead that was moved by the hidden kinetic apparatus of the new stage and was thus another feminisation of a technological process (image 3.05)—underpinned how the transition led by the *conférencier*, became acquired by the means of technology. Before O.F. was visible within the flying gondola, audiences saw the breasts of the *heitere Muse*. A few meters into the flight, O.F. made the audience aware of his location and explicitly pointed out his new entry: 'Jetzt wissen Sie auch, was O.F. heißt: "Oben Fliegt'er"' ('Now you know what O.F. stands for, "Flying Above"') (mdr, (2016):[3:07]).³⁹ In that moment, while the audience looked for O.F.'s unusual position, they also registered each other as they sat in the auditorium. The gondola's movement towards the stage along the hidden rails turned an act of simply 'hanging' into one of 'flying', implying direction and advanced design abilities, thus creating space through a technical moment. As the show's concept already suggested, the 'stage's capabilities to transform (...) and its contrasting scenic divisions (...) ensure a multidimensional experience procedure' (Tilgner, 1983:3)⁴⁰. The new flying tracks thus allowed for the space to be used in a way that was new, i.e. through

³⁹ This statement appears to have been ad-libbed as it does not appear in the prompt and text book of the show.

⁴⁰ 'Die Verwandlungsfähigkeit des Bühnenraumes (...) und seine kontrastreiche szenische Aufgliederung (...) sichern einen vieldimensionalen Erlebnsvorgang.'

vectorised movement that was enabled by remote-controlled machinery. This ‘experience procedure’ created a spatial dialectic, but also a dialectic that related the known to the new. The techno-futurist Fabel engendered the tableau’s subtext through the dialectical relation with its historic referents and which it expressed through a sequence of actions, constellations of machinery, and the exhibition of technological prowess.

In ‘Action in Laser’, the makers revealed the space by using dancers as signifiers of technological systems. After their fleeting moment of descent, the dancers inhabited the stage floor and the lasers started structuring the space that they had just crossed (image 3.07). The section was meant to ‘meet the feelings and tastes of young people; leather costumes, rhythmically accentuated music and the optic distinctiveness of laser beams lend this dance a phantasmagorical and seemingly surreal touch’ (Friedrichstadt-Palast, 1984c:111A)⁴¹.⁴² The use of new lighting technology (lasers) was assumed to be of interest for young people, but was in effect rendered as ‘surreal’, implying a certain unattainability of the whole aesthetic. The lasers even provided the pioneering materiality of this moment. Augustine writes that lasers were one of the few successes of East German R&D. This was basically due to the comparatively low costs of laser development. As early as the late 1960s, ‘an institute of the Academy of Sciences with close ties to the East German military became a major center of laser research’ (Augustine, 2009:142). The civil use of laser technology in the Palast is thus striking, as there had been a consensus amongst researchers ‘that the future of lasers lay primarily in their use in industrial and scientific instruments and devices’ (ibid:142). Being a staple of Ulbricht-era R&D (before 1971), the knowledge about lasers had been disseminated by the 1980s, and now rendered a technological reverberation of the GDR’s electronic futures in the frames of entertainment: although it had been rendered as pioneering in the field of entertainment, the actual technology was comparatively dated. Still, it was used to fortify the forward-thrusting aspects of technology, primarily because its use was now culturally framed.

⁴¹ ‘Gefühlswelt und Geschmack junger Leute werden hier getroffen. Lederkostüme, rhythmisch akzentuierte Musik und die optische Besonderheit von Laserstrahlen geben dem ersten Tanz eine phantastische, unwirkliche anmutende Note.’

⁴² This idea reflects a certain disappointment that was shared by many young people during the 1980s. Knowing that these social groups were increasingly disillusioned by the socialist system, the description of this scene almost seems like a consciously satirical response to these grievances by the Palast.

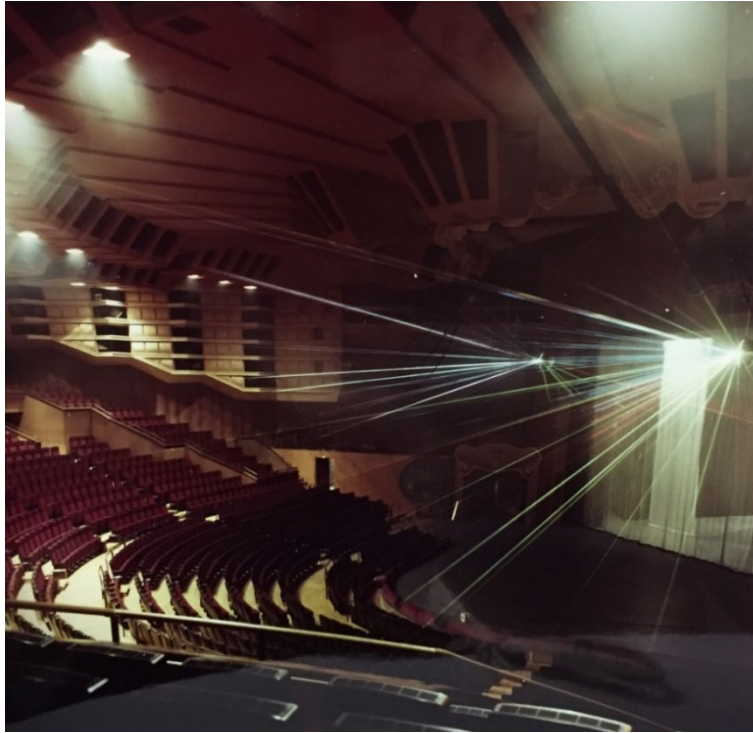
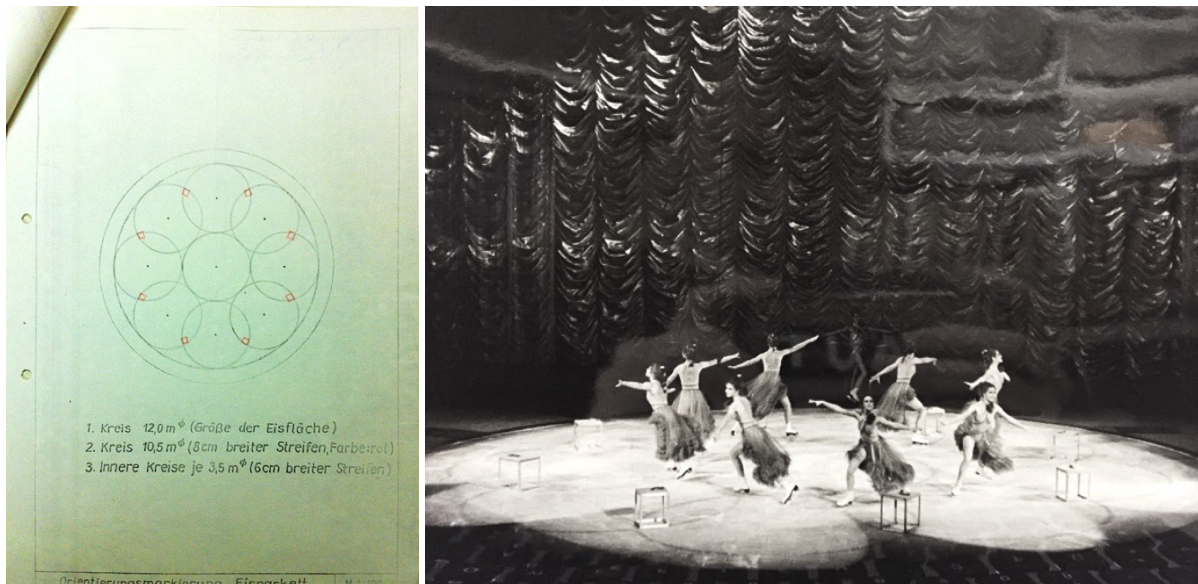


IMAGE 3.07. Laser installation during technical rehearsals for *Premiere: Friedrichstraße 107* (1984).

The scene continued to teach the audience how to read this new space in different ways. To see the added laser beams as objects required the space to be filled with the right amount of haze. Soloist Wolfgang Stiebritz remembers that ‘we ran across the stage with portable haze machines to create a tunnel [of light, A/N]’ (in Welke, 2009:26). Light beams as both the objects and the visible instances of a hidden laser system were accentuated by the dancers’ movements together with the discharge of the auxiliary technology, i.e. the hazers that they carried; the beams could not have existed without the dancers’ actions. In this example, the Fabel of techno-futurism required the different mediums to be recognised as such. Whereas O.F.’s Fabel of techno-futurism was told through the movement of technological systems, this moment’s pioneering, forward-thrusting facet could only be seen when the bodies and auxiliary systems moved. Laser light as an instance of socialist modernity could only exist when rendered by the backward-looking aspects of techno-futurism, i.e. embodied stage practice, that acquired and redefined the relation between known bodies and new spaces. This section showed that using new technology was always about finding new ways to structure space and to demonstrate them to the audience.

For the next section, ‘Pop auf Eis’ (‘Pop on Ice’), the apron was converted into an ice rink by lowering the apron lift and, for a moment, leaving a large gaping abyss only a metre away from the first row’s seats. The ice rink including eight skaters emanated from below. The operations of the technological

complex were emphasised by dry ice that was poured into the hole. Dry ice is a form of very dense stage haze that is slightly heavier than air, causing it to linger on the ground. The resulting visual effect was epic: as soon as the ice rink was on the same level as the apron, the dry ice haze poured onto the stage area, diffusing to all sides, causing, for a moment, the boundaries between the ice and the stage area to be unknowable. While this section's techno-futurist potential involved the staging of this transformation process, which involved systems of hydraulics, remote control, and automation, it was diminished by a very long conversion time of 3 minutes and 45 seconds, as is apparent from the dry tech⁴³ protocols (Ledderboge, 1983:1). The techno-futurist ambitions were diminished by the harsh realities of the actual East-German technological abilities, which failed in meeting the socialist imaginaries.



IMAGES 3.08-09. Ice skating. 3.08. Concept for ornamental space allocation and action spaces of 3.5m in diameter each. **3.09.** 'Kontraste.' An ice-skating ballet section on the apron's ice rink.

The most salient techno-futurist aspect of this section constitutes the acquisition of ice skating as a new stage practice. Based on the theatre's new technological capabilities, the Palast founded a new ice skating ensemble that was initially led by Palucca-trained choreographer Antje Funke.⁴⁴ Funke's practice background reveals that ice skating was understood in the terms of ballet and folk dance, calling to mind

⁴³ Thomas A. Kelly defines 'dry techs' as a 'purely technical rehearsal that gives stage managers and the crew a chance to work out scene changes, the movement of set pieces and light sequences' (2009:141)

⁴⁴ Prior to her appointment, Funke had been a member of the Erich-Weinert-Ensemble, a state-controlled professional folk dance company founded in 1950, 'a dance ensemble of the East German armed forces that became one of the major tools for the socialist state's creation of a national identity', see Giersdorf, 2013:26 and 34.

the classical-technical vortex of appropriating movement with the help of the ballet's classical exercise (see chapter 2). In fact, the bourgeois pastime of ice skating was acquired by socialistically cultivating the body through the classical exercise.⁴⁵ The so-called 'Ice Ballet Ensemble' was initially comprised of 16 alternating skaters (as per conception of March 1983, Funke, 1983:1), also comprising of Gaby Seyfert and Christine Errath. Seyfert had won multiple European and world championships in free skating and became Olympic silver medallist in 1968. She was the first woman ever to perform a triple loop jump on ice (Welke, 2009:27). Employing Seyfert in the inaugural revue was also a political act: after she finished her career in 1970, she was offered a position in the West German *Holiday on Ice* ensemble, which the state did not allow her to accept. Her appearance on the Friedrichstadt-Palast ice rink was thus a kind of compensation⁴⁶, but also an embodied equivalence to the high-performing technically competitive capabilities of the new stage. Although ice-skating was a new practice in the context of the Palast, it was once again understood as strips of existing behaviour that were already paradigmatic of Seyfert's socialist performance practice: her past and practice were thus used to restore ice-skating as a new, yet already socialist, practice.

While the incorporation of the understage ice rink might point towards pioneering technical effort (by considering how the ice was being held cool below the stage, the logistics needed to insulate the space, and the experience needed to operate an ice rink in a heated auditorium), the introduction of ice skating as a new practice also caused problems that were triggered by the unusual shape of the ice rink. In the first ice ballet concept from March 1983, Funke already pointed out the difficulties of figureskating in the round. With a rink measuring 12m in diameter, any performance routine required a 'particular form of skating execution' (Funke, 1983:1)⁴⁷. Image 3.08 shows the pattern in the floor that was meant to keep dancers within the demarcations of their performance area measuring only 3.5m in diameter each. The little cubes on image 3.09 were visual aids and ornamentally structured the space.⁴⁸ Despite the efforts to make this space practicable, Seyfert remembers that 'there was not enough room for jumps, so I had to make standing jumps. And it happened quite a few times that I jumped and hit the floor, with my butt of course. I was still

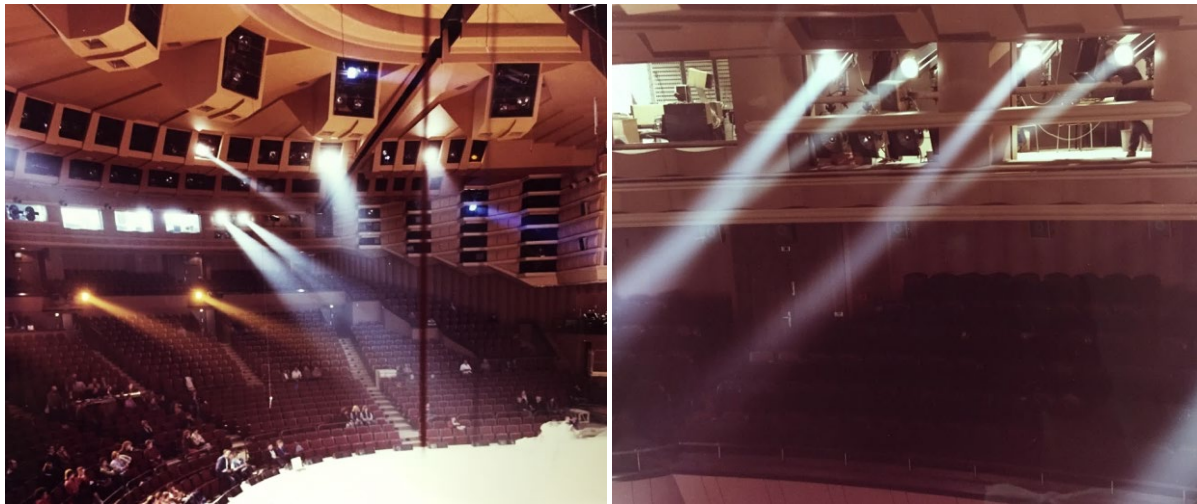
⁴⁵ For ice skating as a bourgeois pastime see Harrison, 152.

⁴⁶ Seyfert succeeded Funke as head of the ice ballet in 1985 and kept the position until 1991.

⁴⁷ 'Durch die Vorgabe der 12 m kreisförmigen Eisfläche ist eine besondere Form der läuferischen Umsetzung anzuwenden.'

⁴⁸ Images of later revues, for example the follow-up show *Variété, Variété*, do not show these cubes anymore, indicating a less ornamental use of the space.

used to the vastness of the indoor ice rinks' (in Welke, 2009:27). 'Pop auf Eis' indicated the challenges of acquiring the past through an unfit stage space: choreographies that built on socialist movement practice were hard to achieve. Sustained moments of synchronicity and ornamentation that are needed to structure the mass body were hardly possible due to the lack of room required for the wide stride a skater needs to gain momentum. The demands that the practice made on the space to render aspiring performances thus impeded the scripted affects that were the matter of chapter 2 and extended well into the 1980s. Although the section was conceptualised as a piece of just under five minutes' length, it showed the logistical challenges that complicated both performance practice and the stage's capability of techno-futurism to render a dialectical experience.



IMAGES 3.10-11. Technical rehearsals for Premiere: Friedrichstraße 107 (1984). 3.10. The lighting equipment is part of the plastered ceiling. 3.11. The front lights are operated by staff and reach the moving bodies on the apron stage.

The last contrast was 'Ballett-Rotationen' ('Ballet rotations'), during which the new theatre received yet another treatment of space acquisition through practice, by fusing the dance vocabularies of 'rock, pop, and jazz' (Friedrichstadt-Palast, 1984c:116A) with the effects of automated stage lighting. After the applause of the preceding section, the ice skaters left the rink to stage left, the apron's stage lift descended, and the covering disk closed the apron's abyss. Set to Frank Stallone's 1983 song 'Far From Over' (arranged for the Palast by Bernhard Wachsmann), two male and two female soloists were accompanied by 30 female and 10

male dancers to present a ‘modern contrast of youthful flair strung together in a non-stop fashion’ (Friedrichstadt-Palast, 1984c:116A)⁴⁹.

Stage lighting, according to cultural industries scholar Scott Palmer, comprises the ‘technical systems and processes to create light on stage’ (2013:xiv). The techno-futurist potential can be construed from a consideration of how these systems acquired the stage space and what the light constellations represented.⁵⁰ Novel computer-controlled lighting systems in the new Palast provoked the creative team to explicitly reassert their agency over the new operation control: ‘The main stage is lit by prioritising the computer-controlled light effects, but still under the guidance of the directing team’ (Friedrichstadt-Palast, 1984c:116A)⁵¹. What is common practice nowadays had to be explained then by assuring the audience that the human agency over the effect was still in the hands of the directing team and not arbitrarily generated by autonomous data-processing systems. The new Palast comprised of more than 1,000 stage lights (Ledderboge, 1984:1) distributed in the back of the theatre, incorporated in the audience hall’s plastered ceiling, in the wings, and above the apron and main stage (image 3.10). While the lighting in the old Palast was controlled analogously with the help of punchcards and finally magnetic tapes, the new Palast’s progressive lighting equipment was controlled through microelectronics. The lighting desk Liwa20 (provided by VEB Starkstromanlagenbau Leipzig-Halle) capable of managing 360 channels in each of the three universes (Baudirektion, 1984:35).⁵² In comparison, today’s standard for remote lighting control is the DMX protocol (abbrev. for digital multiplex) that was developed in 1986 and initially comprised 512 channels per universe. The Palast’s setup was fairly modern for the time. This technology was used to advance the Fabel of techno-futurism as it was combined with other East German illuminants and steering technology. While formerly, stage lighting directly expressed the labour of the human operating a particular

⁴⁹ ‘Das gesamte Ballett beendet dieses tänzerische Non-stop, diese aneinandergereihten Kontraste mit einem modernen jugendlichen Tanz’

⁵⁰ Information regarding the lighting of this scene were extrapolated from the prompt book and the image documentation of the lighting set up in the auditorium.

⁵¹ ‘Ausleuchtung der Hauptbühne unter vorrangiger Nutzung der computergesteuerten Lichteffektwand nach vorgegebenem Regieprogramm!’

⁵² Unfortunately, I was not able to gather information on how many lights the old Palast featured. Image material of the time suggests a much more dominant use of front lighting and large-area fill lighting. In 1992, the Liwa 20 was exchanged by a Strand Galaxy digital operating desk, provided by the now defunct British company Strand Lighting. I am indebted to lighting designer Marcus Krömer (member of the team of lighting designers and technicians who exchanged the Palast’s lighting installations, including the Strand Galaxy, for a MA Lighting system in 2001) for this piece of information. It was confirmed by Andy Stübler, the Friedrichstadt-Palast’s in-house lighting designer.

lamp, the automated lighting system shifted this labour to complex systems of electrical and network set-ups, technological planning and programming prior to the show and expert monitoring during the performance. A change in lighting properties no longer required the person operating the light fitting. Instead, remote-controlled systems ensured precise and high-frequency changes. Lighting equipment, if seen as quasi-actor as per Stoke's definition, produce a materiality, in this case light, that makes a techno-futurist statement through its complexity of controlling colour, light intensity, and focus: human design capabilities and artistic intent were controlled remotely via networked computers and channelled visual impressions of performances that the audience had never seen before, but had known all along. An additional microcomputer (provided by VEB Elektronik Gera) was installed to control a light effect system that addressed incandescent bulbs mounted to scenic elements (ibid), like the backdrop in the revue's opening. Automated lighting became a new means of structuring stage space. The Fabel of techno-futurist lighting thus entailed the pioneering systems as described above, but even more so how these systems were employed to create a dialectic between the forward-thinking means and how they used the stage space in an ornamental, i.e. structured, fashion. Light helped to show the bodies and the space at the same time. A techno-futurist Fabel would thus render a similar approach to lighting by 'chang[ing] the nature of the traffic between the stage and the auditorium' (Palmer, 2013:133).



IMAGE 3.12 Computerlichteffektwand (1984). A computer-controlled matrix of 8,000 light bulbs installed at the rear end of the stage.

Palmer suggests that the physical experience of light ‘affects [not only] the creative process, but also the way in which it conditions the actual reception of images’ (2013:75). The Palast’s new lighting systems thus helped to separate the dancers from the space. On the upper stage’s rear wall in the far distance, ‘a glimmering, ornamental computer-controlled light effects installation accentuates the propulsive, action-packed choreography’ (Friedrichstadt-Palast, 1984c:116A)⁵³. The installation was made up of 8,000 light bulbs (Friedrichstadt-Palast, 1987:48), which were arranged in a matrix (see image 3.12). It could create chase and dimmer effects and represented the glitter of the revue electrified. While the rear wall of the theatre usually remains hidden, it was consciously accentuated and made people aware of both the stage’s end, its usually big scale, and the artificiality of the display. The computer-controlled light wall thus allowed audiences to oversee the complete distance of roughly 60m from the edge of the apron to the rear wall.⁵⁴ The distance between the dancers in the foreground (lit by front lights and follower spots, image 3.11) and the wall in the far back created a three-dimensional space around the dancers, pointing towards a specific spatial relationship and showing that the Palast’s creatives were capable of controlling the vast stage with the means available to them. Theatre critic Anja Braatz interpreted the mastery over the new lighting apparatus as ground-breaking:

The big ballet tableau ‘Kontraste’ demonstrated what the newly installed lighting technology can do: colourful beams emerge at the rear wall like flashes, painting lines, curves, patterns, scattering light onto the classic revue balls that have been adorned with tessellated mirror pieces, refracting the reflections a thousandfold. A seemingly cosmic rush of light and colour. A felicitous prelude of a new era. (1984:4)⁵⁵

Although she read this section in the terms of technological progress and the cosmonautic imaginary of the time, she also recognised the technology’s revue-esque capacity by means of known elements. She read conventional disco balls in relation to a visual narrative of the revue’s glitter and silveriness, re-coining them ‘revue balls’. Her reading of how light structured space shows how embedded these effects were in the GDR’s extra-theatrical striving for electro-technological and data-processing excellence. Stokes points out

⁵³ ‘Eine flimmernde, ornamentzeichnende Computerlichteffektwand im Hintergrund betont die treibende, aktionsgeladene Choreographie.’

⁵⁴ Deduced from architectural plans.

⁵⁵ ‘Das große Ballettbild “Kontraste” jetzt und Vorführung dessen, was die neu eingebaute Beleuchtungs- und Lichttechnik kann: Wie Blitze schießen bunte Strahlen auf die Bühnenrückwand, zeichnen Linien, Kurven, Muster, streuen ihr Licht auf die klassischen, mit Mosaik-Spiegelstückchen belegten Revuekugeln am oberen Bühnenrand, die die Reflexe tausendfach gebrochen in den Zuschauerraum zurücksenden. Ein kosmisch anmutender Rausch in Licht und Farben.’

that '[e]normous effort was devoted in the GDR, in the late 1970s and 1980s, to developing capabilities in the production of semiconductors, electronic products, computing hardware, and software' (2000:188). Lighting systems that represented these efforts while they acquired the revue space by means of separating bodies and space told a Fabel of techno-futurism that interpolated new technological processes in the revue's mechanism of structuring space. Light itself stood for the real advancements of socialist R&D: it was not an imaginary that projected into the future as aspiration, but a real instant in the now-time of the otherwise socialist postponement of development.

After this section, the silvery revue curtain closed, cut off the main stage from the apron, and ended the 'Kontraste' tableau. According to the prompt book, all of this, from the female dancers' descent on point hoists to the extinguishing of the light wall and the closing of the revue curtain, was considered one tableau. Due to its four-part structure, this section could have been regarded as four different tableaux. The fact that it was treated as one single tableau indicates an understanding of technology as helping to achieve constant movement that was not discontinued by the conceptual boundaries of a tableau. Quite the contrary, 'Kontraste' seems to have been the outcome of one of the first concept's creative objectives of the new show:

Within the visual frame, i.e. the image that the audience is confronted with, surprising changes and transitions will occur perpetually. They convey the impression that much is experienced within the shortest interval. Longer scenes will be arranged from the perspective of suspension and pace. (Tilgner, 1983:2)⁵⁶

Underlying this excerpt is the memory of the classical (but predominantly film) revue, which had been understood as a 'feast of ornamentation and metamorphoses' (Klooss & Reuter, 1980:14)⁵⁷ under the 'pretence of sheer endless motion' (ibid:36)⁵⁸. The Palast confirmed that metamorphoses, based on the presentation of technological processes, were regarded as sensational and should, by exploiting the capabilities of advanced stage technology, be attained on the new stage. These assumptions were rooted in

⁵⁶ 'Im optischen Rahmen, im Bild, das der Zuschauer vor sich hat, werden ständig überraschende Veränderungen, Verwandlungen vor sich gehen. Sie vermitteln den Eindruck, daß in kürzesten Intervallen vieles erlebt wird. Längere Einzelauftritte werden unter dem Gesichtspunkt der Spannung temporeich gegliedert.'

⁵⁷ 'Fest der Ornamente und Metamorphosen'

⁵⁸ 'Schein unendlicher Bewegung'

an East German technophilia rather than the Ziegfeldian ‘demonstration of luxury and excess’ (ibid: 36)⁵⁹. Mentioning the revues of Florence Ziegfeld and the revue films of Busby Berkeley in this context is indeed appropriate, because the early 1980s in the GDR were accompanied by a growing interest in these cultural forms. Between the closure of the old theatre and the opening of the new one, dancer and theatre scholar Joachim Stargard published in the *Unterhaltungskunst* magazine a 13-part series of in-depth articles entitled ‘Revue im Film’ (‘Revues in the movies’)⁶⁰, which was loosely based on the book *Körperbilder - Menschenornamente in Revuetheater und Revuefilm* (‘Embodied tableaux - human ornaments in revue theatre and revue film’, 1980) by the West Germans Reinhard Klooss and Thomas Reuter. While the West German book dealt with the denaturalization of the dancing body in the production revues and the genre’s concomitant demise, the East German article series dealt with its still applicable fascination and an increasing reinterpretation of revue elements in East Germany’s contemporary cultural production. Stargard extends the historical reflection to include the German post-war revue films and the modern American musical. In this discursive context, *Premiere: Friedrichstraße 107* seems to acquire the revue imagery of the 1930s film revues by re-configuring them as stage processes of socialist techno-futurism. ‘Kontraste’ reveals how a renewed thinking about metamorphoses fostered a technological thinking that regarded the presentation of stage processes as having a particular capacity to create dialectical meaning-making entities of its own. The tableau’s title confirms this thinking as a conscious and active one; to excavate the contrasts between the new technological systems and the Palast’s revue performance heritage.

In this capacity, ‘Kontraste’ added a new kind of functional tableau to the Palast vocabulary, which focuses on the presentation of technological systems as interrelating stage processes. This development confirms the long-term impact of this revue’s purpose in a very literal manner: to showcase the theatre’s new abilities to transform stage space that had initially been invisible, like the ‘apron, back stage, side stages, arena, ice rink, water basin, and orchestra room’ (Tilgner, 1983:3)⁶¹. If *Premiere: Friedrichstraße 107* were to be discussed in the terms of Greek drama, ‘Kontraste,’ coming before the finale, would assume the position of

⁵⁹ ‘Präsentation von Luxus und Überfluss’

⁶⁰ See *Unterhaltungskunst* issues 1983(2)-1984(4).

⁶¹ ‘Vorbühne, Hinterbühne, Seitenbühne, Arena, Eisfläche, Wasserbecken, Orchesterraum’

the climax and render the moment where the Fabel of techno-futurism received its most complex treatment, showcasing how tightly related notions of pioneering are to practices of reacquiring that which is known.

3.1.3. Back to the future at 8.50pm



IMAGE 3.13. Premiere: Friedrichstraße 107 (1984). Final tableau 'Abends in Berlin.' Light-emitting elements made of shiny materials structure a space that represents socialist Berlin at night.

In the transition tableau before the finale, O.F. Weidling boarded the *Heitere Muse*, the flying device he initially appeared with, and left the Friedrichstadt-Palast's stage. During his final remarks, he declared the mastery of modern technology 'as a duty of our time' (Friedrichstadt-Palast, 1984c:119A)⁶². During these words, the stage transformed: the lamp plafond (that is the ornately decorated lamp grid that can be seen in image 3.13) rose from the bottom of the stage to the position shown in the image and revealed the main stage construction. At the same time, the apron's lift revealed the water basin as shown in the image. The

⁶² 'die Meisterung der modernen Technik als Aufgabe in unserer Zeit.'

revue-esque re-imagination of Berlin came full circle with the revue's cosmonautical opening tableau, 'Frühling in Berlin' ('Springtime in Berlin'). The marquee lighting around the stage's proscenium anchored this final tableau in the moment's real time: 'Abends in Berlin' ('A Night Out in Berlin') happened at 8.50pm (the marquee lights in image 3.13 show 20:50:58 Uhr), implying that technological advancement not only happened in the here and now, but was allegedly also part of East German nightlife, which was portrayed as an appropriation of the revue's historical aesthetics of female glamour.



IMAGE 3.14. Premiere: *Friedrichstraße 107* (1984). 'Abends in Berlin'. Topless Palast girls promenade around the water pool and the cascades.

In this final tableau, the stage played an important role in offsetting the retrospective performance practices in order to provide an example of how familiar aspects of the revue can engage differently with the space. Set to the same musical tune as the first tableau (just with different lyrics), the finale presented all performers, singers, and acrobats of the show. The arched construction on the main stage's turntable revolved: the woman of the ballet—dressed in high heels, white satins, and feathered umbrella hats—paraded, one by one, out of the turning structure, as if it was a revolving door. One by one, 'the ballet

invigorates the tableau' (Friedrichstadt-Palast, 1984c:123A)⁶³, causing a moment of endured motion on the stage, and recalling, once again, the conventional revue aesthetic of a continuously growing number of girls (image 3.14). By using the rotating stage device in that manner, the technology functioned like a metronome for the reappearance of female bodies, and through them, the past. Although the cosmonautic visual language from the first tableau structured the space, it appropriated classical revue knowledge at the same time. Palimpsests of built structures of the classical revue govern this tableau: instead of using the staircase from the first tableau, the Palast replaced it with smaller arches in order to draw attention to the new water basin and the female bodies around it. Based on image 3.14, technology can be seen as an icon of socialist progress. Although the semi-nude female dancers could be seen as icons of a historic revue vocabulary of glamour and dissipation, they were moved by an already appropriated movement vocabulary (as I have discussed in chapter 2) and therefore added another socialist layer.

It was this tableau's ideological task to portray socialist cultural achievements, but these time-bending processes were not always understood. In a conventional reading of the tableau, the smoothly running technologies could be seen as portraying technological progress, while the female bodies framed these as fluid and elegant, and thereby returned to an aesthetics of historic ponderousness and adagio. Theatre critic Hans Brauneis took issue with such moments in which the Palast's inherited performance practice resulted in a discrepancy between the different layers of time. He said,

Impressions of the directorial labour (by Wolfgang E. Struck and Volkmar Neumann; scenery and costumes by Wolf Leder; choreography by Gisela Walther; musical direction by Hans Schulze-Bargin) predominantly refer to conventional practices of the tradition-steeped theatre (...), but cannot quite find a home amongst the new possibilities of the ultramodern stage technologies. (Brauneis, 1984a:n.p.)⁶⁴

For Brauneis, the classical revue heritage, conveyed through top-less girls dressed in feathers and plush did not blend with the technological capabilities of the new theatre. In another article for *Unterhaltungskunst*, Brauneis emphasised on the theatre's technological problems: 'The directors clearly give preference to

⁶³ 'Noch einmal belebt das Ballett unter Einbeziehung der rotierenden Drehscheiben das Bild.'

⁶⁴ 'Impressionen der Regiearbeit (Wolfgang E. Struck, Volkmar Neumann Ausstattung Wolf Leder, Choreographie Gisela Walther, musikalische Leitung Hans Schulze-Bargin) weisen zwar vorwiegend aufs Herkömmliche des traditionsreichen Hauses, (...) können noch nicht so richtig heimisch sein in den wunderbaren neuen Möglichkeiten einer hochmodernen Bühnentechnik.'

revue nostalgia and give reign to both adagio and ponderously elaborated visual appeal, although a bit more tempo and surprising change could have been appropriate' (Brauneis, 1984b:17)⁶⁵. He saw the indexical deployment of these complex systems of motions, machines, and electrically operated systems that controlled mechanic and hydraulic processes as a deliberately constructed reminder of the sentimental classical revue, but did not realise the ramifications of planning a show for a venue that the makers were not yet familiar with. The technological adagio that the theatre produced did not match with the makers' imagination of what this technology ought to achieve: not knowing the effects certain technologies would produce, the makers were not always able to control the pace of these new processes.

Although *Premiere: Friedrichstraße 107* had just been a *Nummernrevue*, that is, a revue that strung together a number of acts, it was still intricately ideological in its staging. Meaning was made between the references to old forms and toward what was meant to be a new socialist form of revue. Techno-futurism was the Palast's means of acquiring performance pasts and appropriating them with the help of new technological systems. Brauneis concluded his review by stating that the technological capabilities of the new theatre were only 'on the cusp of new technological possibilities' (1984b:17)⁶⁶, underestimating the theatre's aim of continuing to restore revue behaviour. While the dialectics of techno-futurism structured the processes on the stage, other backward-looking, i.e. traditional, elements caused Brauneis and probably also other members of the audience to misread technology as still being conventional and ponderous. Even during the revue's progressive moments, the technology in its capacity to acquire the past was not capable of interfering with the otherwise outdated aesthetics that Brauneis took issue with.

⁶⁵ 'Die Regie gibt dem revuenostalgischen Gesichtspunkt deutlich einen Vorzug, läßt betont im Adagio agieren und orientiert noch dort auf einen etwas behäbig ausgebreiteten Schauwert, wo durchaus Tempo, überraschender Wechsel angebracht wären.'

⁶⁶ 'An der Schwelle neuer technischer Möglichkeiten'

3.2. Phantasms, alternatives, and change in *Traumvisionen* (1988)

DREAMS: as vivid in my eyes as orchids.
 Like them brilliant and opulent,
 like them drawing through the giant stem
 of living sap the juices of their strength,
 like them flaunting an absorbed life-blood,
 revelling in the fleetness of the minute,
 then, in the next, pallid as the dead.—
 And when, softly, worlds pass overhead,
 Do you not feel their winds, flower-scented?
 Dreams: as vivid in my eyes as orchids.

—*The Dreamer II* by Rainer Maria Rilke.
Voiceover during the revue's prologue, recited by Achim Wolff
and accompanied by a composition by Günter Fischer.

(Friedrichstadt-Palast, 1988b:n.p.;
 English translation by Ranson & Sutherland, 2011:3.)

I now turn to *Traumvisionen* ('Dreamvisions'), a revue by director Emil Neupauer and dramaturg Isolde Matthesius, which premiered in October of 1988. It was one of the earlier revues conceived from beginning to end in the new building. In many ways, the revue solved the problems of *Premiere: Friedrichstraße 107*. Although both revues used the same stage, the makers of *Traumvisionen* were able to control the perception of precision, which means that technology was still not precise, but scenes were staged in a way that would respond to the actual capabilities of the theatre's technology. This consciousness was narrativised most visibly during transitions. *Traumvisionen* thus offered the next evolutionary step of the institution's distinct staging practices, because it started to understand the stage on the basis of day-to-day practices, which involved the coordination of dance and complex stage processes.

While in *Premiere: Friedrichstraße 107*, the Fabel of techno-futurism had also been the show's plot, *Traumvisionen*'s plot was a journey of a man through his own imagination, whose dreamscapes were established predominantly through the means of the stage. At the beginning of *Traumvisionen*, the unnamed hero (played alternately by Rainer Genss and Boris Nicolae) rushed through the auditorium towards the apron stage. A curtain between the apron and the main stage was lit by laser light and an additional video projection introduced 'four enticing phantasms' (Friedrichstadt-Palast, 1988a:6)⁶⁷. None of them was

⁶⁷ '4 verführerische Traumgestalten'

topless, but these four revue girls (named Phantasia, Miracula, Fabula, and Futura) would lure—even abduct—the hero into their own magical realms, whose rulers they were, and thereby once again command the theatre’s technological apparatuses. In this revue’s four big transitions, the mistresses commanded the transformations of the stage and thus set the impetuses for change. These changes were related to the revue’s overall theme of dreams and their implications. The prelude’s poem ‘The Dreamer II’ by German poet Rainer Maria Rilke (given in this section’s epigraph) introduced the concept of dreams as orchids, as rare and extraordinarily beautiful ideas that wither, but while they wither encouraging scents from elsewhere bring hope for yet another dream. This voiceover framed the ‘enticing phantasms’ as ideas, alternatives, or imaginations that deviate from the protagonist’s everyday life and already asks what it is that is at stake, his reality, or his dreams? As the hero arrived on the apron, the four phantasms entered the main stage by descending from above, and each danced a small solo with him, before they disappeared again into the wings. The last one, Phantasia, stayed and guided him into her realm.

Berliner Zeitung’s reviewer Birgit Walter praised the revue as ‘one of the Friedrichstadt-Palast’s most impressive productions to date’ (1988:7)⁶⁸. This critical success happened one year before the fall of the Berlin Wall, which led to the reunification of Germany in 1990. As I have argued throughout this dissertation, most of the Palast’s aesthetic activities during the time of the GDR have been seen through this defining historical event, and there are indeed reasons one could construe a revue called ‘Dreamvisions’ as the creative staff of the Palast surrendering to the harsh realities at a time when the rest of the country also grew disconsolate over the oppressive state and, as a result, envisioned alternatives. In this section, however, I see *Traumvisionen* as a restoration of a new kind of revue that built on the failures of *Premiere* mostly by infusing a narrative. The first file memo, dated 10 February 1986, mentions the production as ‘Variété II’, indicating that it ought to function as a formal successor to the 1984 revue *Variété*, *Variété*. This suggested a programme based on a succession of individual acts, rather than a revue that developed a thematic arc. This conception, however, was developed into a show with the working title, ‘*Stewardessenträume* (‘Dreams of Stewardesses’)’ (Matthesius, 1987a:1), which was to illustrate the life of an air hostess on Interflug, the national air carrier, in four tableaux. In August 1987, a few conceptual stages later, the show’s

⁶⁸ ‘Grad keine besonders neuartige, aber eine, die sich zwei Stunden lang so ideen- und metaphernreich erzählen läßt, daß daraus eine der eindrucksvollsten Produktionen entstand, die im Friedrichstadtpalast bisher zu sehen waren.’

idea had been completely changed and now introduced the four muses and described their tableaux on the basis of stage effects (Matthesius, 1987b:1). This conceptual development shows a growing confidence in the means of the new stage and its directors' capabilities to direct them. *Traumvisionen* appears to be the first site-specific production that has grown organically out of the revue makers' understanding of the stage's capabilities. The tableaux were created as a result of the day-to-day interaction with the stage's technology. Admittedly, the revue's subtitle, 'a ballet show with international circus acts (*'Ballett-Show mit internationaler Artistik'*)', does not capture this practice, but it implies the ballet's capacity to tell its story by the means of the dancing body, which was inserted into the highly technologised stage environment. Choreographer of the first and second tableaux, Nigel Lythgoe,⁶⁹ registered that '[p]roductions like *Traumvisionen* require more than just steps' (in Klingbeil, 1988:n.d.)⁷⁰ to express the coherent narrative. Uta Schmidt of *Neue Zeit* expressed this relation of dance to the stage technology by praising the fact that the revue 'tells a magical story full of imagination and sensuality...and finally understands how to make the most of the Palast's dimensions' (Schmidt, 1988:8)⁷¹. Although it was a predominantly terpsichorean revue, Schmidt recognised the role of space design, which prompts questions about the role of stage technology as the prime concern of a revue that was meant to be told through the moving bodies.

Through its prologue tableau, *Traumvisionen* already epitomized two kinds of change. Firstly, the socialist realist depictions of Berlin and everyday life in the GDR that used to be common practice were dismissed in *Traumvisionen*. The revue thus stands in relation to the national eschewal of socialist realism as a dominant artistic principle (Giersdorf, 2013:83), which had been rather fluid and was only officially abolished during the last conference of the association of artists in the same year this revue premiered. Consequently, and secondly, the renunciation of realist depictions required a different rationale for the revue's staging. The fantastical worlds had now been imagined as 'art in socialism',⁷² which meant that the practices of dialectics were still applicable. The voiced-over prologue, for example, immediately rendered

⁶⁹ Lythgoe is an English choreographer who worked for Gene Kelly, Shirley Bassey, and the Muppets. From 2000, he was a producer of Pop Idol and American Idol. He also created *So You Think You Can Dance*.

⁷⁰ 'Bei Produktionen wie "Traumvisionen" reichen Schritte allein nicht aus.'

⁷¹ 'Erzählt wird eine märchenhafte Geschichte voller Phantasie und Sinnlichkeit [...] die die Dimensionen des Palastes einmal voll auszumessen versteht'

⁷² For the change from 'socialist realism' to 'art in socialism', see Giersdorf, 2013:84.

the non-realist frame through a poem and established a mysterious space of departure through laser light and haze. The continued simplicity of themes ensured a focus on the high-tech presentation as a framing for the dancing bodies. When Phantasia and the man walked towards the curtain, it rose and revealed the dark main stage area that was covered in a dense stage haze. The promptbook notes that Phantasia's 'fairy world between the sun and the moon emerges out of the mist' (Friedrichstadt-Palast, 1988a:6)⁷³, which meant that a built set that had been mounted onto the stage wagons pushed through the haze, while lighting elements on the set illuminated the haze and eventually lit up the whole stage. Phantasia had invited her whole court—each and every one was dressed 'in a flashy and distinctive manner' (ibid)—and the protagonist was to witness a party composed of several dances and circus acts.

Transitions expose the ways in which a revue uses the means of the stage to render a smooth watching experience. In 1984, when the stage-technological processes could not present the transitions as intended, their failure was read as a conscious recreation of a ponderous historical sentimentality. *Traumvisionen* re-envisioned formerly simplistic scene changes by drawing on a techno-futurist thinking that became subject to the revue's plot. In the old Palast, by comparison, transitions usually happened in a drop scene (a short scene that happened in front of the curtain while the scenery was changed behind it), or via blackouts. This was due to the lack of big enough side stages and moveable stage facilities (either across the stage or from below or above the stage) that would allow for elegant scene changes. Except for the flies in the stage tower and the revolve on the main stage, only so much movement was possible. The new theatre's technological reality allowed revue makers to appropriate those formerly usual transitions and render them as moments driven by technology and the expert operation thereof.

At the end of Phantasia's festivities, four female dancers with spears led by the second muse, Miracula, crashed the party, kidnaped the protagonist, and took him to Miracula's realm (image 3.15). The prompt book simply states that 'an open conversion of the stage creates a seamless transition into the second tableau' (ibid:7)⁷⁴, without mentioning the details of this process. Back in 1983 and 1984, when the workings of the new stage had still been a matter of theory, the transition processes were elaborately described in the working journals: for none of the revues between 1984 and 1990 have the makers detailed the transitions

⁷³ 'Märchenwelt zwischen Sonne und Mond taucht aus einem Nebelvorhang auf.'

⁷⁴ 'Eine offene Verwandlung vom 1. ins 2. Bild schafft einen nahtlosen Übergang in die neue Welt.'

between tableaux as thoroughly again as for the inaugural show. The absence of details about this transformation in both promptbook and production notes evidences a new day-to-day reality of interacting with a stage environment where solutions were found and implemented by being in the space, not necessarily by previous planning.



IMAGE 3.15. *Traumvisionen*. Miracula's Realm (1988). The people of Miracula, a manless society.

Applying a techno-futurist reading to the analysis of the open transition that was planned between the first and second tableau of *Traumvisionen* allows me to draw conclusions about how this transition was supposed to function. With this being a kidnapping scene, the transition during which the world of Phantasia disappeared into the void of the rear stage from whence it came while Miracula's world materialized at the same moment would need to be seamless in order to still make a techno-futurist statement. To construct a transition required a technological thinking that implied, in a socialist sense, a view on stage processes that reflected the pioneering claims of the theatre. These transitions happened because characters triggered these actions: Miracula and her entourage remained centre stage, while the space around them converted. The narrative throughline was associated with the characters, and the stage conversion between the visual entities of the revue's tableaux rendered the moment that framed the embodied revue vocabulary. This moment created the sensational display that led into the main effects of the next tableau.

Another rather lengthy transition happened after the intermission and used the means of the stage to offset a time-dependent process. The apron curtain (a tableau curtain that separated the audience from the semi-circular apron) was lifted and revealed the emerging water basin together with its trick fountains. On an island in the water, Fabula danced with the protagonist. The promptbook identifies Fabula as the ‘romantic-lyrical’ (Friedrichstadt-Palast, 1988a:10)⁷⁵ one of the phantasms, who was now in a relationship with the hero. Around them, several couples danced in laser tunnels (image 3.16) and populated a revue stair at the back of the stage. The abstract set evoked notions of female glamour that were rooted in a contemporaneous 1980s visual language (image 3.17 for reference, taken towards the end of the tableau after the water pool had disappeared already). After their dance, the two enjoyed a moment of intimate togetherness on their island and watched Mark David’s trapeze act that took place right above them. The technical moments of the transition into the tableau and its further progression into David’s trapeze act demonstrate the makers’ advanced technological understanding, as the processes became part of the manner in which the tableau progressed. In 1984, the emergence of the understage pool, which took 390 seconds (Ledderboge, 1983:1) to complete, was read as a conscious reflection of the adagio qualities of the classical revue. Here, the whole length of this process was framed by the opening of the tableau curtain, engaged trick fountains, added lighting effects, the revelation of a whole new set in the background, and dancing bodies on the island. The tableau’s opening used the same stage apparatus as *Premiere: Friedrichstraße 107*, but, again, attributed it to the larger narrative of the show and by doing so, rendered a more believable Fabel of techno-futurism, because the transition’s overlapping processes fit the narrative occasion of the happy couple’s revelation.

By having allowed the technology the time it needed to convert the space, the makers also allowed the scenography to develop its own vocabulary: the water pool’s effect was enhanced by trick fountains and a surrounding visual landscape filled with dancing bodies. The duration of the moment, although it was the same as before, became a performer within the performance. From a techno-futurist point of view, the duration of this effect became staged and the process therefore acquired what had in the past been perceived as failure. The still-underlying Fabel of techno-futurism ensured a degree of technological excellence that

⁷⁵ ‘romantisch-lyrisch’

worked in alliance with the plot by still rendering moments typical for a Palast revue. Seamless, however, did still not mean illusory. In connecting a genre-specific performance vocabulary with a fantastic staging, the Palast showed that the believability was to be judged by the accuracy of the technological display as processes, not necessarily of that process covering up the machine through which it was achieved. *Traumvisionen* used the same stage apparatus as *Premiere: Friedrichstraße 107*, but in comparison to the inaugural revue, it left behind ideological affirmations and used a distinct dialectical practice to trigger a revue-esque display.



IMAGES 3.16-17. *Traumvisionen* (1988). 3.16. Couples dance in laser tunnels in the realm of Fabula. 3.17. The set of Fabula's realm evokes connotations to female glamour, rooted in a 1980s' visual language.

Traumvisionen thus rendered two discordant messages. On a narrative level, the revue tried to explore the consequences of alternatives: no matter what kind of alternative the hero imagined, he was continuously drawn to the nightmarish other. Even when he found romance and peace with Fabula, he was enthralled by the sweet voice of Futura, who in the fourth tableau tried to turn him into one of her inferior robots. After he had screamingly awoken from the last tableau's horrors, the four phantasms returned to him with orchids (the flowers that represented dreams and hopes in the revue's opening prologue), while the stage transformed into the place of departure from the opening. Although the show could be understood as an anxiety-producing confirmation of the contemporaneous state ideology—'there are no satisfactory alternatives to state socialism'—it still leaves the hero, who so avidly explored different realities, alone in the dark at the end of the show. If the staging, i.e. the Fabel of techno-futurism and thus the way in which

the means of the revue rendered this narrative are considered, new possibilities emerge of stagings that are still of a dialectical nature and able to acquire the revue of the past for new endeavours. I will return to the implications of this potentiality in the fourth chapter where I talk about the post-reunification revue.

3.3. A Socialist Total Theatre

Throughout the end of chapter 2 and the first half of this chapter, I have showed that the Palast revue was conceptualised as a form of practice, that is, as reconstructions of technological and choreographical behaviour. This thinking also influenced the built structure of the new theatre. The reconstruction of the new Friedrichstadt-Palast was embedded in discourses about re-attaining a *Volltheater* that were expressions of distinct forms of restoring revue behaviour through dialectics. This section complements the previous section and focusses on the concretised forms of techno-futurism as they formed the distinct technological history of the new theatre building.

The new Friedrichstadt-Palast as a piece of urban architecture already exposes the dissonant impulses of the cultural practices inside. Its architectural style has been described as socialist Post-modernism: ‘an architecture that made playful use of historic quotations and popular forms’ (Urban, 2015:223). The building combines face concrete, which was the most common way of building in the GDR,⁷⁶ with references to the revue’s heydays. The lofty window panels exhibit subtle revue references and were described as ‘abstracted revue girls with raised arms’ (Prasser in Urban: 2015:225). The development of the theatre’s inside, however, was much more lavish with its references. Its stage architecture was very much rooted in the dialectical thinking of Marxist cultural appropriation and is thus a socialist response to the theatre’s own history of repurposing space and stage practices.

In order to parse out which sections of the building’s history were beneficial to the socialist project, the Palast periodised its history as a time before and a time after Max Reinhardt’s acquisition of the old theatre in 1919.⁷⁷ The time period before Reinhardt obtained the theatre is often forgotten when the history

⁷⁶ For a West-German perspective on East German urban construction, see n.a., 1983:254-271, and Urban, 2009.

⁷⁷ In the GDR, critics were torn over the question of whether Reinhardt’s legacy was crucial for the GDR’s project of heritage acquisition and, if yes, which parts of his legacy could be beneficial to socialist world building. Generally, his

of Friedrichstadt-Palast is discussed, because the main stage form during that time was circus, not theatre or revue as such. The technological history of the theatre, however, started right at the beginning in 1867, when it was built as Berlin's first market hall.⁷⁸ Instead of providing a comprehensive history of the building, this section lists some of the major technological achievements of the time before Reinhardt, in order to show that forms of entertainment that the building housed were produced through technological spectacle.

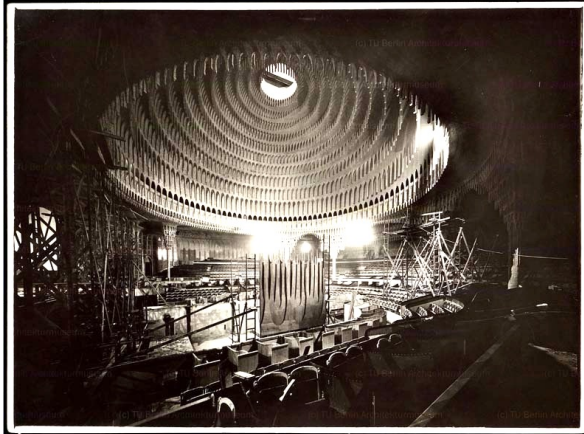
Before Reinhardt, the building was shaped by several proprietors. Following its quick economic failure in 1867, the building lived through many conversions with most of them having been geared towards the display of circus and variety programmes, which required seating around a circus ring. It was acquired by Albert Salamonsky in 1873, who converted the space into the 'Markthallen-Zirkus ('Market-hall Circus')' with a horse race track and room for 4,500 spectators (Carlé and Martens, 1987:11). In 1879, Salamonsky returned to Russia to found what after his death would become the Moscow State Circus. Renowned German circus director Ernst Renz took over the 'Riesenzirkus' in Berlin and extended the seating capacity around the circus ring to 8,000 (ibid:18). Technologically, the old circus theatre had mobilised some quite impressive capabilities. On 23 October 1884, the theatre was illuminated by 2,000 incandescent bulbs for the first time (ibid:23) and in 1891, the circus ring was flooded with water for a spectacular comedy play set on the island of Heligoland: 'a 25m-high water fountain illuminated in different colours, men and beast dived into the water' (ibid:26)⁷⁹. After Renz's bankruptcy, Bolossy Kiralfy and Hermann Haller acquired the theatre in 1897. They extended the stage halfway into the auditorium, pulled up a proscenium of 44m width and incorporated stage lifts.⁸⁰ Its new name was 'Neues Olympia-Riesentheater ('New Olympia Gigantic Theatre')'. Following Kiralfy's unsuccessful programmes, Albert Schumann obtained the theatre. After he converted the space back into a circus ring in 1900, he later returned to proscenium displays for a high-tech stage with an area of 800m² (ibid:37). He also installed the theatre's first stage tower and flies (Vetter, 2005:4) and remained director until 31 March 1918.

theatre was perceived as having rendered theatres of illusion and was therefore considered part of the capitalist decay of culture. For a socialist perspective on Reinhardt see Braunlich, 1966. A western perspective on Reinhardt, see Fuhrich and Prossnitz, 1976.

⁷⁸ For the first official announcement concerning the construction of the market hall, see Lent, 1867:n.p.

⁷⁹ 'eine 25 Meter hohe, farbig angestrahlte Fontäne steigt auf, Menschen und Tiere stürzen sich in die Wogen.'

⁸⁰ For a history of space conversions, see Bauverwaltung Preußen, 1923:229-232; Carlé and Martens, 1987:32.



IMAGES 3.18-19. *Das Große Schauspielhaus*. 3.18. The Großes Schauspielhaus during its reconstruction based on plans by architect Hans Poelzig. **3.19.** The Großes Schauspielhaus after the 1938 conversion, image ca. 1940.

The acquisition of the theatre by Max Reinhardt in 1919 marks a specific but short period in the theatre's history that was characterised by the repurposing of the stage as a proper proscenium stage that coincided with alterations of both the stage and the auditorium as an expression of technological excellence.⁸¹ In 1919, he renamed the theatre 'Großes Schauspielhaus' and architect Hans Poelzig executed major alterations (image 3.18), whose importance to the reconstructed theatre from 1984 is discussed below. Between 1924 and 1926, the theatre was the stage for Eric Charell's revues, which formed much of the Friedrichstadt-Palast's foundation myth as a revue theatre. After three revues, *An Alle* (1924), *Für Dich* (1925), and *Von Mund zu Mund* (1926), Charell used similar staging strategies to stage extravagant versions of German operettas. Amongst which was an adaptation of *Der Mikado* (1927), *Die Lustige Witwe* (1928), or *Casanova* (1930). In 1930, he staged the operetta *Im weißen Rößl*, which was very popular with people. Poelzig fled from the Nazi regime in 1933 and many of his alterations to the theatre were scrapped out in 1938, after it had been labelled as an expression of 'degenerate art' (Carlé and Martens, 1987:92)⁸² (image 3.19). The Nazis ended the use of jazz music, but continued the theatre's operetta tradition until 1945.

After the destruction caused by both Nazis and bombs, the theatre never again attained its magnificent interiors and full functionality of the stage. The rebuilding of the Friedrichstadt-Palast in the 1980s stands in the light of this history, because the destruction of the interiors during the Third Reich started the conversation about the Palast's reconstruction as a new theatre building as early as 1948. The trajectory towards a new building was thus set when the state took over the theatre and made its artistic

⁸¹ At the time, Reinhardt had also been the director of the Deutsches Theater, which was located across the road.

⁸² 'entartete Kunst'

operations subject to socialist ideology. The second paragraph of the company agreement that followed post-war director Marion Spadoni's dismissal states that '[t]he object of the company is the continuation of the current Friedrichstadt-Palast-Variety...and the construction of a new theatre that rehouses the Friedrichstadt-Palast ensemble' (Friedrichstadt-Palast, 1948:2)⁸³. The formation of heritage-acquiring dramaturgies, as described in chapter 1, and the development of socialist virtuosity, as the second chapter considers, are two stepping stones along that trajectory. The idea for a new theatre kept circulating in planning documents and the prospect of a new theatre lent momentum to the institution's practices of heritage acquisition. Having inherited a theatre that was not socialist and whose material condition and position in cultural memory stemmed from a time before socialism, the Palast had always felt encouraged to acquire that history through the means of performance. The ultimate prospect had thus been a new theatre, built under socialist circumstances, that acquired the material aspects that condition the modes of producing and watching revue extravaganza. The contexts that nourished the ideas for the new theatre thus refer to a past that preceded the formation of socialist East Germany.

3.3.1. Engendering the dialectics of techno-futurism

When the old theatre closed on 29 February 1980, the theatre's head creatives had already been working on concepts for a new, technologically progressive theatre for more than four years. Before that time, technicians had long mourned the fact that the theatre had been in a fairly bad state. At least since 1967, a differentiation was made in written internal communication between the Palast as a rather provisional venue and an imaginary *Volltheater*, that is, a fully functional theatre that would at least allow certain kinds of technical labour to be carried out. In the preparation for the Palast's fourth *Ökonomische Konferenz* ('economic conference') in 1968, the technical department mourned the destruction from the Second World War that had not been remedied. Amongst those missing technological systems were: 'retractable staircases and lifts...side stage wagons, which meant, not every part had to be moved by muscle power. The [former, A/N]

⁸³ 'Gegenstand des Unternehmens ist die Fortführung des jetzigen Friedrichstadt-Palast-Varietés [...] und der Aufbau eines neuen Theaters, in welches das jetzige Friedrichstadt-Palast-Variété umsiedeln soll.'

brick-built cyclorama allowed for projections' (Friedrichstadt-Palast, 1967c:1)⁸⁴. An appendix written by hand and underlined in red states that, twenty years after the necessary reparations following the Second World War, 'maintenance alone does not suffice anymore. Today, the fly loft needs to be staffed with double the number of colleagues compared to 10 years ago' (Friedrichstadt-Palast, 1967d:1)⁸⁵. This shows that technology had been a burden rather than an imaginary horizon for the Palast's cultural production. These documents, however, express a plain need, rather than an interpretation of this basic need in terms of techno-futurism.

The two concepts that this section discusses illustrate how the Palast's techno-futurist thinking advanced and were ultimately fulfilled in the actual concept that was realised at Friedrichstraße 107. The first concept, penned in 1976, just encompassed an overhaul of the complete stage machinery and was a response to the theatre's growing state of dilapidation.⁸⁶ The concept remained unrealized, because the costs could not be justified by the theatre's increased state of disrepair, and the old Palast was renovated only to be fit for purpose.⁸⁷ The second, also unrealised concept was penned in 1979 and was meant to outline a stand-alone revue theatre as a part of the socialist redevelopment of the southern end of Friedrichstraße.⁸⁸ The following section discusses the Palast's technological thinking as having developed through these two concepts. In 1980, after the theatre had been closed, the planning was taken over by the state's Abteilung Sondervorhaben ('Department of Special Projects') as a project of special urgency. The project was led by

⁸⁴ 'klappbare Stufen und eine Hebebühne, (...). Man konnte mit Bühnenwagen von der Seitenbühne arbeiten und brauchte nicht wie heute jede Wand oder plastisches Dekorationsteil mit Muskelkraft (...). Auch der gemauerte Rundhorizont bot die Möglichkeit der Projektion.'

⁸⁵ 'Die Wartung allein genügt nicht mehr. Heute muß der Schnürboden mit 100% mehr Kollegen besetzt sein als vor 10 Jahren.'

⁸⁶ A report by VEB Baugrund Berlin from 19 May 1976 attested increased signs of subsidence that jeopardised the theatre's stability. This location had been covered by water in the seventeenth century and was raised continuously in the following centuries. The report continues to mention that the building had been subsiding since the 1930s (Brauner and Müller, 1976:13). Measurements taken in the 1950s showed a subsidence of about 5 cm that had occurred over the past 25 years (ibid). Between 1966 and 1976, the building subsided only 2mm/year (ibid:15). Subsequently, architect Horst-Hilmar Drexler suggested a complete overhaul of the stage machinery and projected roughly 32 million Marks to cover this entire project. 27 million Marks alone would have been necessary to repair the interiors, including the 'theatre's means of production, i.e. stage fittings and lighting (Rekonstruktion und Modernisierung innere Erzeugnßlinie einschl. der Bühneneinrichtung u. Beleuchtung)' (Drexler, 1976:1).

⁸⁷ In July 1977, the seating was renewed, an air conditioning system installed, and some of the mainstays renewed (Carlé, 1975:210). The seating capacity was reduced from 2,780 to 2,412 (Ackermann, 1977:1). The stage machinery remained untouched and the theatre's aesthetic demands were left unacknowledged.

⁸⁸ For the redevelopment of Friedrichstraße during the 1970s and 1980s, see Urban, 2009:181-214.

Ehrhardt Gißke (1924-93) and executed by architects Manfred Prasser, Walter Schwarz, and Dieter Bankert.⁸⁹ The new Friedrichstadt-Palast is thus the product of a series of ideas that aimed at imagining a new technological future that was based on the old theatre's stage practice. The old Palast had been demolished a year after the new theatre opened in 1984.

The next sections reconstruct the main ideas of the concepts from 1976 and 1979. My preceding discussions of the stage practice of techno-futurism enable me now to filter out of the concepts a techno-futurist thinking. Although this could be seen as an illicit reverse historicisation, I want to emphasise the importance of thought processes and cultural practices that existed regardless of a periodisation of before and after a new building, but have rather been refined in concepts of technology. A Marxist dialectical thinking helped the revue makers to imagine a new theatre on the basis of technologies that responded to their dialectical enquiries. This happened long before the state entered this discussion in 1980. The new Palast can thus be regarded as an institutional, thus practice-based development, as opposed to a political event in an allegedly failing country.

3.3.2. Between continuity and denial: Acquiring technological histories

The old theatre's growing state of disrepair during the late 1970s gave practitioners an incentive for the theatre to reflect on what the severe deficiencies meant for their artistic productions. They acknowledged that 'the Friedrichstadt-Palast [theatre], in the light of its cultural, aesthetic, and technological development, no longer suffices the needs of its visitors and its theatre professionals' (Friedrichstadt-Palast, 1976b:3)⁹⁰. It added that past renovations of the theatre were only carried out to secure the Palast's short-term operations and had not added to its aesthetic and artistic development. This awareness represents the emergence of the Palast's technological trajectory. It described a way of thinking about acquiring the Palast's performance heritage, i.e. its genre's past, with the means of stage technology. In the concept's preamble, the Palast

⁸⁹ Manfred Prasser also designed the interiors of the multi-purpose parliament building Palast der Republik (Palace of the Republic, overall architect: Heinz Graffunder). The main hall of the parliament was an octagonal hall that 'had moveable podiums and could be adapted to different functions' (Urban, 2015:223).

⁹⁰ '[...], daß der Friedrichstadt-Palast derzeit nicht mehr den gewachsenen kulturellen, ästhetischen und technischen Bedürfnissen seiner Besucher und der Theaterschaffenden entspricht.'

regards itself as producing theatrical work in the tradition of ‘the world-famous variety theatres “Wintergarten”, “Scala”, and “Plaza”’ (ibid:1)⁹¹. References to 1920s revue theatre appear throughout the concepts, which is us keeping with how German theatre from the 1920s is generally remembered:

Underwritten by the new ideology of art’s fusion with engineering, the transformation of stage into machine accelerated in the 1920s as directors and designers rapidly incorporated hydraulics, revolves, screens, moving parts, and complex lighting and projection apparatuses into their *mise-en-scène* (Salter, 2010: 25).

Writing in this strand of memory, the 1979 concept emphasised that ‘[t]he sublime technological preconditions of the revue and variety theatres of the 1920s have never been continued by today’s traditions, but could be realised again if the Friedrichstadtpalast were to be rebuilt’ (Struck, 1979a:5)⁹². This perception of history was in fact an appropriation of history as it underrepresented the reality of revue making during the 1920s. Most revue theatres were not equipped for a large number of varied scene changes and decoration constructions. Illusion of depth was not created by a rich scenery, but through forced perspective scene painting, flats, and staircases. Acquiring these technological histories thus concerned the successes and what had still been remembered as such and were conflated with the technological history of the Großes Schauspielhaus.⁹³ Both rebuilding concepts provide detailed lists of technological changes that were needed to fulfil the pioneering role that the Palast had in mind. The most striking aspect about the overhaul concept of 1976 is that all of the suggestions later appeared in the new Friedrichstadt-Palast at Friedrichstraße 107, almost unaltered. The Palast continued to understand modern stage technology as a tool to access its performance past in order to continue a tradition of excellence. With the projected improvements, the Palast’s creative leadership imagined a more flexible stage that would form their response to the history of both the revue and the institution. This included various kinds of swift transitions (e.g. lifts, sliding side stages, mobile proscenium bridge), special effects (e.g. water, ice, new lighting equipment, marquees), large set pieces (e.g. movable side stages), and visibly transformable space (e.g. a revolve).

⁹¹ ‘der weltberühmten Varietés “Wintergarten”, “Scala” und “Plaza”’

⁹² ‘Die bereits in den 20-er Jahren vorhanden gewesenen grandiosen technischen Voraussetzungen für Revue- und Variététheater, die von der heutigen Tradition nie wieder aufgenommen wurden, könnten bei einem Neubau mit der Tradition des Friedrichstadtpalastes wieder realisiert werden.’

⁹³ For the technological realities in Berlin’s revue theatres between 1900-1938, see Kothés, 1977:79-82.

The revolve, for example, was understood as a Reinhardt staple. When Poelzig modernized the auditorium and the stage apparatus, he added a retractable apron to the stage that was 30m wide and 22m deep. Carlé refers to a ‘revolve [that] measured 18m in diameter and was confined by two movable staircases, each measured 4.10m’ (1978:66-7)⁹⁴. As early as 1905, Reinhardt had first used a revolve ‘as an integral part of the performance’ (Harwood, 2015:105) in his production of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* at the Deutsches Theater across the road, and had then introduced this technology here. Although Schumann incorporated the theatre’s first revolve in 1909 (Carlé and Martens, 1987:27), it was Reinhardt’s and Poelzig’s modernizations that stayed in the public memory; critic Fritz Engel called the Großes Schauspielhaus modernisations a ‘triumph of technology’ (in Carlé, 1978:67)⁹⁵. The 1976 restoration plans aimed at acquiring these technological means once again and extended what had been regarded as pioneering in the past by adding revolves, movable stage platforms, stage lifts, and facilities to provide water and ice entertainment as requirements for the modern socialist revue. Ideas of rationalization, increased precision, and a greater potential for movement on the stage dominate the 1976 concept.

Accessing the theatre’s technological past also came with ideological implications that concerned the ways in which such cultural appropriations were meant to be remembered. In the 1979 concept, the authors suggested locating a public archive of revue arts on the third floor of this new theatre. With a view onto the ‘boulevard’ (Friedrichstraße), the archive was to explicitly showcase the ‘development of the Friedrichstadtpalast from 1945 to the present, a music archive, a film archive, and a file archive’ (Struck, 1979b:2)⁹⁶. The fact that the archive should not have held material from before 1945 or the heydays of the revue during the 1920s, but only document the socialist efforts put an interesting twist on history that denied the kind of continuation that the 1976 concept emphasised. Almost twenty years after the building of the Berlin Wall, these archive plans express the vernacularisation of the East German conscience. As a result, this archive might be construed as a form of the continued appropriation of history. Although they intended to work with classical revue histories, their institutional archive was to exhibit the achievements of cultural

⁹⁴ ‘sie hat eine Drehscheibe von 18 Metern Durchmesser und wird links und rechts von zwei beweglichen 4,10-Meter-Treppen begrenzt.’

⁹⁵ ‘ein Triumph der Technik’

⁹⁶ ‘Entwicklung des Friedrichstadtpalastes von 1945 bis zur Gegenwart, Musikarchiv, Filmarchiv, Ablagearchiv’

acquisition and appropriation only. Books on the Friedrichstadt-Palast's history published in the GDR show that there was indeed plenty of material that could have also been housed in this archive.⁹⁷ Yet, the denial of continuities creates a counter archive that was based on Marxist cultural appropriation techniques that reflected the actual changed social relations and different conceptions of modernity and progress. The Palast attempted to change a canon and disturb the symbolic order of the revue extravaganza's imaginary not only through performance appropriation, but also in the ways in which it was remembered as cultural memory.⁹⁸

Besides working with its own past, the choices that the Palast made throughout its conceptual stages and in the actual building demonstrate how East German revue makers also tried to pick up trends that happened in contemporaneous Western forms of theatre. Seen in a pan-German context, most of the proposed devices were far from revolutionary. During the 1950s and 60s, many West-German cities received new municipal theatres and many shared a basic fitting: 'The stage technology in a theatre's main auditorium was typically to the highest specification available, with integrated hoist, rotation and wagon systems for the scenery enhanced by powered drive system and precision pulleys' (Harwood, 2015:112). However, none of these have been used to work in a revue trajectory. In the world of the revue, Paris's Lido had a built-in water basin since its inception in 1946. The revue production shows in Las Vegas and Reno, Nevada, had only just started to bulk up their sceneries to offer visual experiences that accommodate transformable stages and performance practices on water and ice.⁹⁹ Besides their intention of acquiring their own technological past, the performance makers at the Palast seem to be answering these contemporaneous developments by providing a wish list of the technological capacities that constitute their imagination of revue; ice, water, marquee lighting, and movable stage platforms run in this vein. In the following, facets of the new Friedrichstadt-Palast's stage architecture will be analysed in relation to its historic referents and the ways in which these technological histories were appropriated.

⁹⁷ I am especially referring to Carlé's 1978 and Carlé and Marten's 1987 book, and a vast number of *Artistik* magazine articles that have discussed Berlin revue during its heydays.

⁹⁸ This approach was confirmed in the Palast's archive regulations that were imposed onto the institution based on a model ordinance on archives from 22 December 1980. The Friedrichstadt-Palast as a socialist cultural institution was obligated to archive all 'official written material, which, because it has obtained social significance' (Struck, 1981:1). Archive material, which was put under the control of the dramaturge in chief, was thus considered 'inalienable (...) cultural assets' (ibid:11), because it stood in direct relation to the 'historic development of our society' (ibid).

⁹⁹ I will discuss the relationship between the Friedrichstadt-Palast and Las Vegas further in chapter 4.

3.3.3. A conscious us: Developing the audience-stage-dialectic



IMAGES 3.20-21. Comparison of the view from the stage. 3.20. Old Friedrichstadt-Palast (late 1970s). **3.21.** New Friedrichstadt-Palast (1984).

The new Palast's interior bifurcation of audience hall and stage space reconfigured the relationship between the audience and the stage, and thereby entered a conversation about a German theatre tradition that is about the Wagnerian total stage at his Festspielhaus in Bayreuth, inaugurated in August 1876. The main purpose of Richard Wagner's theatre was to reconfigure the relationship between performers and the audience to increase the efficacy of his opera by means of illusion. Since this concept became the guiding rationale for music theatres in Germany, it is worthwhile to take Wagner's theatre as a counter example in

order to describe the relationship between the audience and the stage in the creation of credible stage moments. His ideas about bifurcation and how it determined the production and reception of the theatrical display is a productive springboard into discussing the socialist theatre's principles of operation. Matthew Wilson Smith argues that Wagner's operas required a stage that is 'a totalizing performance machine that aims to hide the mechanism of its own production through appeals to nature, to roots, to myth, to blood, to folk' (2007:47). The proverbial pivot point of Wagner's concept is the abyss, a '*mystischer Abgrund* ('mystic gulf')' (ibid:30) between the audience and stage that was made up of the orchestra pit, out of which the music 'arise[s] as if by magic' (ibid), in combination with a double proscenium arch. The total stage that Wagner proposed builds on the premise of divorcing the audience from the production processes of the make-believe world on the stage in order to, according to Wilson Smith, 'entrance the audience [so] that the fundamental distance between spectator and spectacle would be overcome' (2007:32). This new spatial organization guided the audience to see the mechanized and technological processes on stage as an illusion.

I argue that the Friedrichstadt-Palast's stage was built in order to do the opposite. Although the theatre's architecture tried to hide certain aspects of the production processes, it was still interested in showing processes of mechanical labour, while concealing aspects of production at the same time. The old theatre (image 3.20), for example, had a proscenium stage, a horseshoe-shaped seating area and stall seats. The new theatre does not have such an orchestra pit. The Wagnerian mystic gulf is gone. The apron even extends several meters into the auditorium. The first row of seats is located right under the apron's stage edge. The auditorium accommodates about 1,895 people and is arranged amphitheatrically on raised egalitarian seating; the shape of the stage's apron determines the shape of the auditorium and ceiling (image 3.21). The new Friedrichstadt-Palast thus engages with the Wagnerian division of realms, but comes to a different conclusion. It departs from the Wagnerian binary 'reality versus ideality' (Smith, 2007:32), but allows for a different mode of watching: unlike Wagner, the idea was not to build an ideal theatre, but one that allows for the aesthetic project of the Palast to advance. This included reshaping, not breaking with the fourth-wall-illusionism by design to shift the audience's attention to the processes of space creation in a revue. As performers were present in the audience's space, their labour was more immediate.

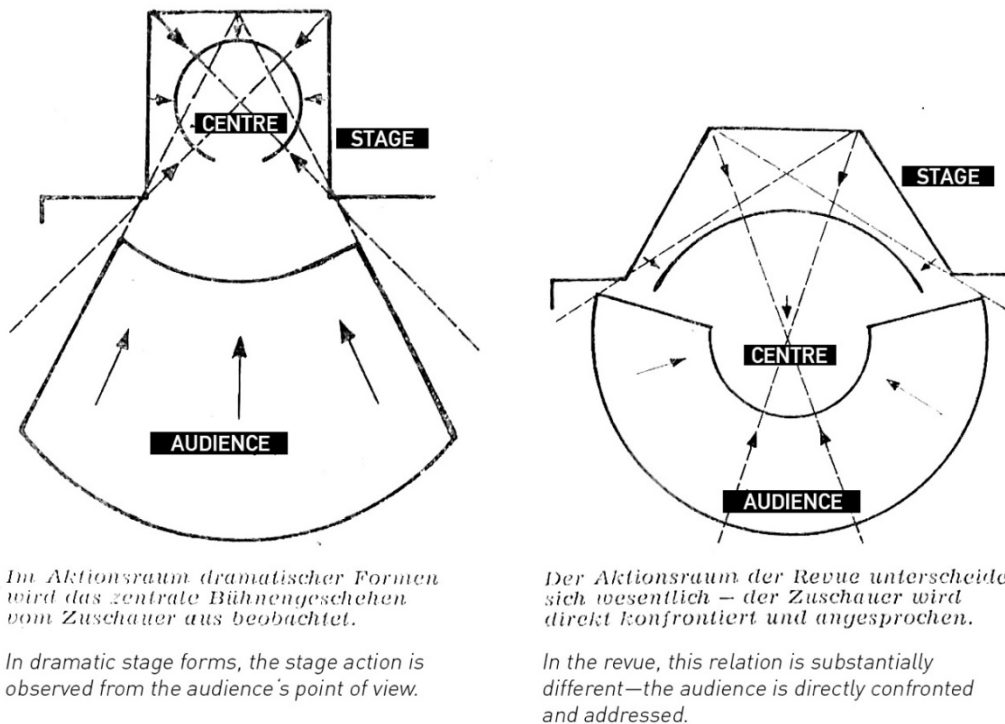


IMAGE 3.22. The ideal revue stage. Peter Erdmann's illustration of a conventional proscenium stage in comparison to a what he called revue stage, amphitheatrical stage. The sightlines demonstrate how the centre of the presented action shifts towards the audience who are now closer to the labouring stage bodies.

The fan shaped auditorium of the Palast appears like an appropriation of the pre-technological classical Greek theatre of Epidauros. In 1976, Palast choreographer Peter Erdmann¹⁰⁰ had already explored this stage form's revuesque potential: changed sight lines, he argued, would change the embodied revue practice. In a special issue for *Unterhaltungskunst* magazine, he examined how revue dance could develop without having to rely on Kropp's and Schröter's concept of the classical-technical vortex (see chapter 2). In order to arrive at the spatial coordinates for revue dance practice, Erdmann proposed a 'show-style remodelling' (1976:8)¹⁰¹ of any given dance vocabulary: 'show-style is nothing less...than a focused deployment of all available means to design an artistic objective in a way that is memorable' (ibid)¹⁰². A semicircular stage design would thus shift the centre of the stage onto the apron (see image 3.26). According to his thinking, this would change the relationship between performers and audience, and therefore alter an

¹⁰⁰ Erdmann was also chairman of the dance section of the committee for the entertainment arts (Carlé and Martens, 1987:166).

¹⁰¹ 'showmäßige Umformung'

¹⁰² 'Das "Showmäßige" ist folglich nicht mehr (...) als der konzentrierte Einsatz aller zur Verfügung stehenden Mittel und Möglichkeiten, ein künstlerisches Anliegen auch mit Hilfe dekorativer Lösungen besonders einprägsam zu gestalten.'

experience that was, in his view, distinctly different from Wagnerian forms of reception (see image 3.22), which the old Friedrichstadt-Palast was a variation of. He acknowledged that such a space would re-frame dance practice, and thus alter modes of watching:

spatial-choreographic structures, forms and space tensions undergo considerable changes caused by a new directionality. These new spatial relationships must be met with a reshaping, an adjustment of the choreographic language (Erdmann, 1976:8).¹⁰³

Although Erdmann's concept is not mentioned in the concepts for the new Palast, the vocabulary with which the new space was conceptualised continues a trajectory of thought that imagined the new total revue stage as a process of interfering in the reconstructions of revue behaviour differently and towards a socialist horizon. Erdmann's views were still embedded in a thinking about bodies typical for the 1960s and 1970s. In the final version of the 1979 concept, however, the authors pursue a similar kind of thinking that acknowledged practice: 'The basic attitude of a revue is to reorganise the relation between performer and spectator in order to maximise the experiential value of a Friedrichstadt-Palast revue' (Struck, 1979c:5)¹⁰⁴. In this discursive context, the amphitheatrical stage is a fusion of ideas of reshaping the 1970s revue experience through bodies and the late 1970s/early 1980s ideas of getting the high-technological revue stage to help do that. The new Friedrichstadt-Palast is thus a materialisation of the different forms of a dialectical thinking, uniting embodied, directorial, and spatial revue practices.

¹⁰³ 'die räumlich-choreographischen Strukturen, Formen und Raumspannungen erfahren eine wesentliche Veränderung durch den neuen Richtungsbezug. Diesen neuen räumlichen Verhältnissen muß eine Umformung, Anpassung der choreographischen Sprache folgen.'

¹⁰⁴ 'Die Grundhaltung einer Revue besteht darin, den engen Kontakt zwischen dem agierenden Künstler auf der Bühne und dem Publikum so umzusetzen, daß das Maximale beispielgebend auf der Grundlage der Erfahrungswerte des Friedrichstadtpalastes neu gestaltet wird.'

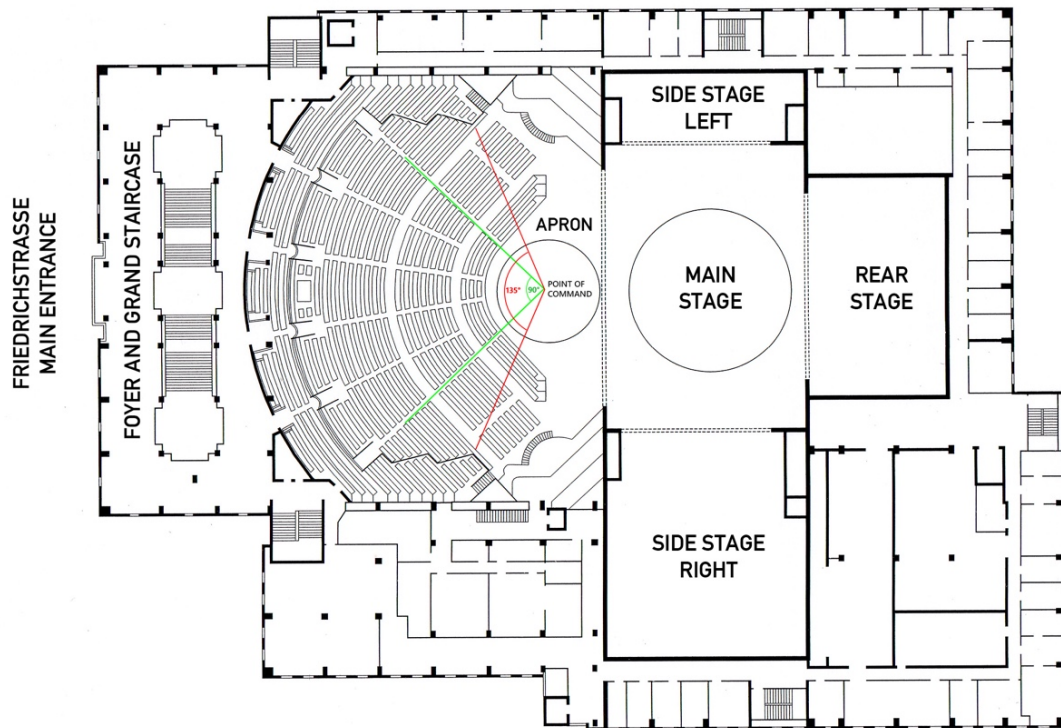


IMAGE 3.23. The new Friedrichstadt-Palast. Top-view of second floor with angles.

In technological terms, the new Friedrichstadt-Palast reconfigured the stage-audience-relationship by acquiring traces of both the theatre of Epidauros, whose seating angle was 90° , and the horse-shoe formation of the old Friedrichstadt-Palast (Struck, 1979a:3). A theatre's point of command, i.e. 'the geometric centre of an open stage' (Appleton, 2008:112), is at the point from 'which an actor can command the attention of the entire audience, without the need to turn the head' (Strong, 2010:69) and is usually perceived to be 135° (ibid). The centre of the Palast's 90° seating arc is in the middle of the apron's stage lift (image 3.23). However, the new Palast's point of command range exceeds the seating arc into its straight extensions to either side of the stage. The conception of this architecture was more idealistic than it was practical, given that, on the one hand, it allows for the apron to open wider in comparison to the historical examples. This layout works on the principle that the audience should be made aware of itself and, on the other hand, be able to literally look behind the spectacle from specific seats. In addition to offering different viewing experiences within the same space, the first version of the 1979 concept demanded that the seating be deliberately uncomfortable to prevent the spectator from 'losing his tension and energy towards the

presentation' (Struck, 1979a:3)¹⁰⁵. This thought can be seen as a Marxist appropriation of former seating arrangements and was carried through to the actual theatre. The extended angle of the seating and the abolition of the mystic gulf work in alliance to create an even greater engulfment of the stage and thus a greater immediacy of the display that was meant to cause an awareness of processes (see image 3.24). Whereas in Wagner's stage layout, the visual pivot point was the abyss, the theatre's technological highlight had now assumed that spot; the appropriation went from dark abyss to an immediacy that exposed the inner machinery of the produced stage effects.



IMAGE 3.24. The new Friedrichstadt-Palast during rehearsals in 1984. The half-circular apron gives shape to the auditorium.

This understanding of the apron stage as rendering an intimate immediacy, however, worked against the enormous depth of the stage, which caused challenges for this immediacy on the apron to be sustained. The proscenium arch, cast in concrete, still cut off the main stage from the apron. Figuratively speaking,

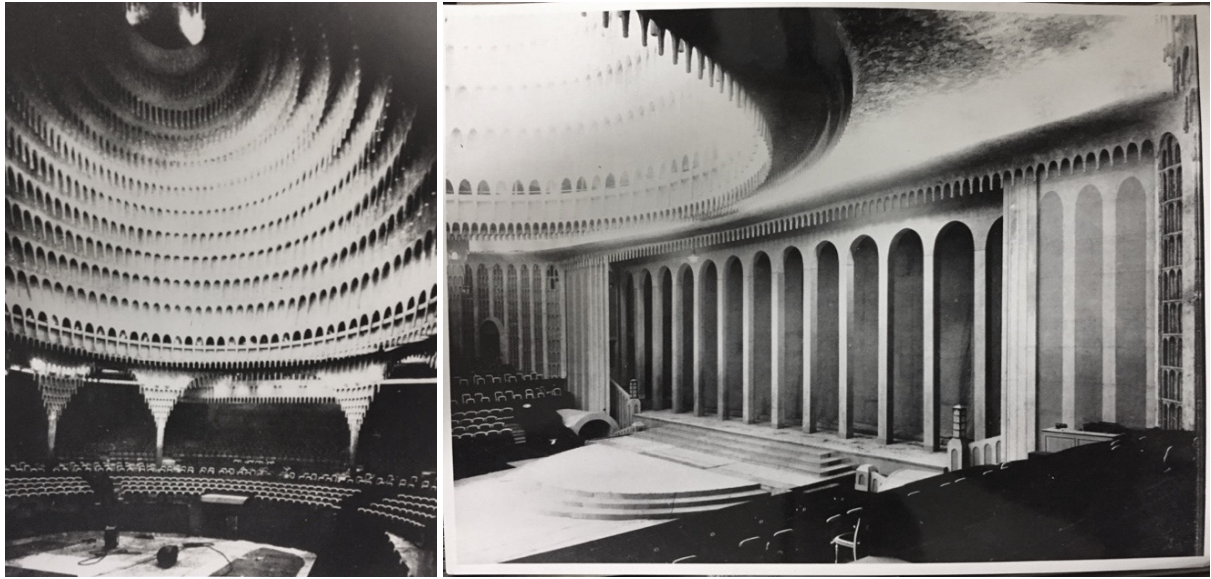
¹⁰⁵ 'seine Spannungshaltung zum Dargebotenen verliert'

despite all the efforts to fuse audience space with stage space, the proscenium arch remained a carrying element of the aesthetic, because it had been a structural necessity in order to combine a pre-technological stage form with the latest stage equipment. In a meeting protocol from 1980, construction director Gißke was in a conversation with set designer Wolf Leder and director Wolfgang E. Struck about the width and function of the proscenium arch. While set designer Leder pleaded for a smaller proscenium of 24m width, Gißke countered that only 32m width would justify the erection of such a big stage. Struck reminded everyone that he understood the apron as actual play space, and the main stage would function for complex sets and display of transitions. His associate director Volkmar Neumann saw this bifurcation of the stage in direct opposition to the old theatre, where the audience was split into several sections by main stays (see image 3.20). Now that the audience had become one again, the stage could provide a new kind of depth by functional space allocation, and a wide proscenium arch would create a greater unity between these spaces. This thinking eventually caused Gißke to come full circle in his appropriation of the mystic gulf under the guidance of Marxist principles: ‘An orchestra would disturb this immediacy’ (in Leitel, 1980:2)¹⁰⁶. Instead, a diversity of sensual impetuses that architect Manfred Prasser described as a ‘total experience’ (in Urban, 2015:232), not a total illusion, would combine different visuals, sounds, and even smells and thus start a subtle corrosion of the theatre’s bifurcation.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ ‘Der Zuschauer soll auf jeden Fall so nah wie möglich an der Bühne sitzen. Orchester im Vordergrund wäre ein absoluter Störfaktor.’

¹⁰⁷ The Friedrichstadt-Palast’s orchestra was initially housed on balconies to the left and right-hand side of the stage. As technology progressed and music became increasingly amplified, the orchestra was moved into spaces underneath the balconies, which were transformed into booths to ensure unobstructed sound.

3.3.4. Ceiling matters: Acquiring the effect



IMAGES 3.25-26. Das Große Schauspielhaus. 3.25. Poelzig's dripstone cave. **3.26.** Reinhardt's retractable front stage apparatus.

The design of the ceiling had in fact been one of the major concerns in the 1979 concept, as it was tied up with a historical problem. When Hans Poelzig redesigned the interior of the old theatre for Max Reinhardt in 1919, a dome of plaster stalactites—Berliners sneeringly dubbed the theatre '*Tropfsteinhöhle* ('dripstone cave')'—not only provided an extraordinary sight, but also suppressed reverberation. The dome bridged the gap between the seating's horseshoe formation and the apron and created a shared space for audience and actors. The challenge that the writer acknowledged in their 1979 concept was about how to acquire this landmark structure as effect, not as materiality:

The dripstone cave by Prof Poelzig, which was obliterated by the Fascists, should not be reconstructed in this form. Instead, the good acoustics between audience and stage that this architectural structure made possible should not only be obtained, but improved. (Struck, 1979a:3; emphasis in original)¹⁰⁸

On the one hand, one could assume that a rebuilding of the ceiling structure would have been too expensive and maybe even beyond the point of the architects' capabilities at the time. On the other hand, this thought was in line with the East German technophilia and their belief that the powers of engineering (theatre architecture) and even science (to create an adequate sound) could be harnessed to restore the effects of the

¹⁰⁸ '[...] der sogenannte Stalachmitenbau [sic!] von Prof. Poelzig, den die Faschisten vernichtet haben, sollte nicht in dieser Form wiedererstehen, aber doch diese architektonische Gestaltung entstehende gute Akustik zwischen Bühne und Zuschauerraum muß nicht nur erhalten sondern verbessert werden.'

past. It was also an expression of techno-futurism's backward-looking aspect, trying to atone for the destruction of the interiors through the Nazis by acquiring the effect of the old form, rather than the old form itself. The dripstone-cave-passage disappeared from the following versions of the concept. Instead, it introduced ceiling projection technologies to recall a renowned image of Berlin's pre-war variety theatre Wintergarten that featured artists like the Tiller Girls or Fritzi Massary (an Austrian-American soprano singer) and was destroyed during the Second World War. It received its reputation for its 'artificial starry night sky' (Urban, 2009:195), provided by new electrical lighting at the time (Klooss and Reuter, 1980:39). The Palast intended to exchange direct electrical lighting for indirect projection. The dialectic of techno-futurism was already inherent in this example. The acquisition of the effect (the illumination of an otherwise dark audience hall ceiling) through the socialist understanding of technology and modernism provided a similar result, but appropriated its aesthetic using the cutting-edge, thus forward-thrusting technologies of the new theatre. Technology was a means to an end and the employment of mechanized stage apparatuses and new electrical systems, like remote control systems and modern lighting, are expressions of a distinct German technological tradition.

The actual interior still shares abstract similarities by providing a plastered ceiling, which houses the effect machines. The auditorium looks as if it were made from one piece. Most importantly, it did not show the palimpsests of times long passed, like main stays, rigging, or chandeliers. Rigged lighting equipment was embedded into the plastered ceiling.¹⁰⁹ Built structures caused by lighting outlets continued along the side walls and prevented reverberation (image 3.07 and 3.10). Flying tracks are embedded into the plastered ceiling. In its inauguration design, the ceiling's plastering continued across the apron just before the proscenium arch, visually uniting the forestage area with the auditorium (see image 3.1). During the inauguration, the plastered ceiling was painted in a salmon-pink. Compared to today's colour, dark-blue, lighter colours do not absorb as much light, causing much of the architecture to be seen even during the show.

The new theatre, when seen through the lens of practice, that is, as a form of restored doing, was in fact a response to the old theatre in which the Palast reimaged what a socialist revue stage would need

¹⁰⁹ Recently, additional rigging has been added again as technology and the need for more and more complex lighting advanced.

to represent: the audience's seating arrangements, the purpose given to the ceiling, and the bifurcation of the performance space were all different, but also strikingly similar in how consciously these aspects were shaped on the basis of daily working routines and how working through these aspects by means of performance appropriated them. Through the new theatre, the Palast extended its dialectical thinking, that is, its practices of Marxist cultural acquisition and appropriation to also include the built form. *Premiere: Friedrichstraße 107* developed alongside the deliberation that this section discussed and must thus be seen together, with practice taking the lead role.

3.4. Coda: Towards and beyond techno-futurism

While the new Friedrichstadt-Palast took form at the Friedrichstraße 107 construction site, chief dramaturg Horst Mittag took issue with the lack of a 'usage-specific conception' (1981:1)¹¹⁰ that would define how exactly the new stage-technological means would allow different kinds of artistic realisations. His objection came more than a year before the first concept for the inaugural show was penned. Nevertheless, Mittag urged his team to start thinking how existing practices could be acquired based on the theatre's new 'revue-esque and variety-esque' (ibid)¹¹¹ material requisitions. Mittag started the conversation by reminding the planners to include facilities for artistic and acrobatic presentations on the theatre's forestage to make performances of the theatre's past possible. His example was clown Fatini's act on top of the vacillating pole in the 1956 revue *Kinder wie die Zeit vergeht* ('Oh Boy, how time flies'; see chapter 1). Mittag referenced a performance from 23 years ago, which was considered a time of change and positives, when the horrors of the Second World War and the utopias of socialism still structured the hopes for a great socialist future. Mittag's choice exposed a kind of awkwardness, or ideological belatedness, that concerns questions of how exactly the new technology was supposed to acquire the Palast's cultural pasts. Nevertheless, the theatre makers continued their trail of thought and devised concepts that embraced technology as a means to restore their practice.

¹¹⁰ 'nutzungstechnische Konzeption'

¹¹¹ 'revue- und varietégemäße'

Peter Erdmann, by thinking space through his body, had already explored the directorial shifts that such a semicircular stage would trigger in the ways the new space would be used. He had already realized that ‘non-logical motivation through diversion, interruption, and montage’ (Erdmann, 1976:9)¹¹² would need to be employed to make the new space work. He regards these as legitimate ‘scenic solutions’ (ibid), because they exist ‘independently and could thus function as continuation or addition’ (ibid)¹¹³ to any given content. Technology, when used correctly, could aid in explaining away the surface strangeness of performance material that originated in another time by means of transition, montage, and high-technological presentation. The resulting Fabel of techno-futurism was the directorial device to control the described social relations that the new technology already engendered.

In 1985, the Palast authored a report that assessed the new building’s effectiveness towards the great goal of finally becoming a true socialist revue theatre (Friedrichstadt-Palast, 1985). Throughout its existence in the GDR, the Friedrichstadt-Palast employed methods of performance acquisition and appropriation by means of dramaturgy, the moving body, and finally technology. The report, however, repeats the old demands for a quicker development towards a socialist revue theatre, despite there being no indication about what a truly socialist revue theatre was supposed to engender. Just before the end of the GDR, when the ideological pressures had started to lessen—the abolition of socialist realism as an artistic doctrine is an example—a revue like *Traumvisionen* showed how the dialectics of the socialist theatre could indeed render a new kind of revue theatre.

The Palast developed a consciousness that its technological capabilities could be used as means to acquire stage practices. Over the years, the repertoire of dialectical staging practices was extended and, by showing stage processes as spectacle, continued to work beyond the historical confines of the GDR. In this regard, the staging practices that have resulted from the Palast’s unique techno-futurist thinking are the outcome of East Germany’s distinct technological traditions. The development of techno-futurism was the last major development of the Palast’s Marxist cultural acquisition and appropriation practices. The next chapter discusses these developments in the light of German reunification and describes their efficacy in a reunified Germany.

¹¹² ‘Nichtlogische Motivation durch Ablenkung, Unterbrechung und Montage’

¹¹³ ‘szenische Lösungen, die sowohl selbstständig, als auch Weiterführung und Ergänzung sein können.’

‘Las Vegas in Berlin’: The global show & some Marxist performance paradigms

Of course there is much to say about the Friedrichstadt-Palast’s revue practice after the fall of socialism, but in the context of the previous chapters, I argue that with the change of the ideological circumstances after the reunification of Germany in 1990, the fading social contexts of Marxist cultural practices of acquisition and appropriation have caused these strategies to appear overtly theatrical, because its performative legacies remain unacknowledged. They still continue as specific forms of the Palast’s revue behaviours. As a result, I perceive socialist and post-socialist times not as successive, but as intermingling, in parts recycling, where the present exhibits manifestations of the past. In the latter half of this chapter, I explain how the performative archive of post-socialist revue behaviours have created unique aesthetics that expose a, sometimes, messy reappearance of temporal layers that were thought to have ended together with socialism. This chapter is thus informed by my own enquiries as both a practitioner and a historian. As a practitioner, I am interested in what the shift to the global entails in terms of production values and references. But as a historian, I am also interested in how it extends into today’s revue making, how it shapes aesthetics underneath conscious design choices, and how the Palast can use this history to shape its global futures.

In 2009, during my second internship in the Palast’s creative direction department¹, I helped during the official 20th anniversary festivities of the fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9th under the motto: ‘The Fall of the Wall and Reunification - the Victory of Freedom.’² For this afternoon, the Palast’s stage was repurposed for a podium discussion with the world’s political leaders from 1989, who were hosted by chancellor Angela Merkel and Horst Köhler (9th President of Germany). Helmut Kohl (1st chancellor of reunified Germany), Mikhail Gorbachev (1st President of the Soviet Union), and George H. W. Bush (41st President of the United States of America) shared the Palast’s stage to reminisce about the political changes

¹ The department comprises of the theatre’s creative director, his personal assistants, and resident directors (‘Abendspielleitung’), who are responsible for preserving the artistic quality of the revues. The creative director reports to the general director, who is also the show’s producer. All other directors (costume, technical, musical, ballet, casting, facility) also report to the general director.

² The event was facilitated by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and took place on 31 October 2009 at the Friedrichstadt-Palast and commemorated the fall of the Berlin Wall.

of 1989 and the ensuing demise of the Eastern bloc in 1990 (image 4.01). A part of my job was to receive and accompany the historically important guests to the general director's office before the event. And so, I shared the intimacy of an elevator ride from the ground floor to the second level, where the general director's office is located, first with George H. W. Bush, and then with Mikhail Gorbachev. While President Bush asked me about my position (I admitted that I was an intern) and whether I got paid appropriately (I affirmed), President Gorbachev remarked: 'This is a great theatre,' while he smiled and nodded affirmatively.



IMAGE 4.01. 'The Fall of the Wall and Reunification - the Victory of Freedom.' Reunification event on 31 October 2009. First row, left to right: Mikhail Gorbachev, George H. W. Bush, Helmut Kohl. Back row, left to right: Angela Merkel, Eva Luise Koehler, Horst Koehler, Maike Richter-Kohl, Bernhard Vogel.

Although I noticed the historical grandiosity of this moment in which the two leaders of formerly opposing economic and ideological systems first shared the same elevator in quick succession and later the stage of the Friedrichstadt-Palast, the meaning of what they had said to me in those few seconds epitomises the Friedrichstadt-Palast's contemporary identity as a formerly fully-subsidised theatre that, in the 25 years after Germany's reunification, found ways of adjusting its aesthetics to the increasingly global world of theatrical entertainment and related financial pressures. President Bush's remarks about the real ramifications of money in a market economy invite a reading of the present as a consequence of vital economic deliberations. In this context, one could argue that the Palast's modern practice emerged from the break from the socialist past that led to market economics. However, the transition into the new

economic system came with a transfer of aesthetics that President Gorbachev might have alluded to when he mentioned the grandiosity of the Friedrichstadt-Palast theatre. Gorbachev himself stands for this historical transition. His policies of *glasnost* ('openness') and *perestroika* ('restructuring') culminated in removing from the Soviet Union's constitution the Communist Party's entitlement to govern the socialist republics in 1990. This eventually led to the end of both the Cold War and the Soviet Union in 1991. Having been part of the transition to a time after socialism, Gorbachev's elevator remarks afford an opportunity to reconsider the accession of East Germany to the Federal Republic as a part of that global transition, thus placing the Palast's performance practices in a global context. In this sense, the 'great theatre' is about history and a continual reappearance of other temporalities amidst the institution's presentness. In this context, it is worth reconsidering the cultural production of the Palast in post-reunification Germany from a cultural point of view as transitioning from socialist to 'post-socialist' and democratic, as opposed to a rigid switch from socialist authoritarian regime to western global market capitalism. Without wanting to overread my elevator rides with these two important figures of contemporary history, they do nevertheless indicate a new kind of blend of global and local contexts that is grounded in both economic and aesthetic frameworks while being shaped by a specifically German way of coming to terms with its past. And even more than 25 years after reunification, this blend is still shifting, transitioning, and appropriating the Palast's revue practice.

While this assessment might be framed as a temporal linearity from past to futures, this chapter revisits a selection of Friedrichstadt-Palast shows from the past 25 years and analyses them in relation to the cultural transition between socialist and post-socialist, and non-capitalist and capitalist times. By so doing, it continues, like the previous chapters in this thesis, to challenge dominant notions of German reappraisal of GDR culture and how these discourses relate to stage practice. They are framed in part by Germany's public discourse of 'coming to terms with one's past', which involves a critical examination of the country's past and amounts to various forms of reappraisal of East German culture and social life. While this process started with the delegitimising of East German culture in the early 1990s, the discourse has since moved on to include the multiple histories and polyvocal memories of having lived in the GDR. At the Palast, however, the cultural cohesion between a post-socialist present and its East German past is still deemed irrelevant. Consequently, the institution's history is still denied being read as a continuous strand of

practice from before to after reunification. These early views on reappraising East German culture structure the Palast's current operations. Although the totalitarian model of the GDR has lost currency amongst historians, the failed-state-narrative, because it was built on the perception of the GDR as a failed totalitarian regime, still underpins the neglect of the Palast's past. More importantly, this view also implies that all art was essentially understood as state art.³ However, the preceding chapters have challenged the perception of GDR culture as being purely state art by interrogating the institution's merits of shaping their performance aesthetic within the constraints of the artistic doctrines of socialist art.

The political changes of 1990 in its dominant West-German narration is understood as a distinct break that ended the socialist past and with it its aesthetic relations. While nowadays there exist a rich discourse about how the GDR is remembered, the Palast does not seem to have entered this debate to contribute to the emerging pluralism of views. However, the cultural structures that were formed under socialism continued being effective, primarily because they constituted what 'revue' meant to those who made them at the Palast. Consequently, the aesthetic relations between the theatre's GDR past and its contemporary works remain largely unacknowledged, but continue to function as subtle behavioural archives. In the same way as the previous break in the 1950s that engendered socialist revue performance was embedded in a cultural recoding of performance towards the socialist ideology, so the post-reunification revue was embedded into a recoding that involved a reorientation to market economics.

It is important to distinguish between 'global' and 'globalisation' when discussing post-wall East Germany. Although theatre scholar Dan Rebellato points out that 'globalisation is a specifically *economic* phenomenon' (emphasis in original, 2009:10) through which capitalism extends modes of cultural production across the globe, 'the global' as referred to in this chapter denotes globally travelling references that are acquired by the Palast. Being 'global' after the wall essentially meant that the citizens of the former GDR were now free to travel globally and consume entertainments and leisure experiences at first hand. In terms of Palast performance, it meant that the institution's inspirational range, both geographically and

³ In her book on the relations between East German literature and censorship, Sara Jones surveyed the prevalent discourses on GDR art and the roles intellectuals played as complices and critics. Literature, as well as theatre, was understood as 'having a central function in the building and development of socialist society' (2011:11), which resulted in art having been exploited by the state's agendas. Jones argued that this circumstance, paired with the dominant perception that Marxism as a closed world view could only cultivate totalitarianism by default, resulted in the 'all art was state art' argument post-reunification (ibid:1-2).

culturally, spread out globally, with the West becoming the primary source of inspiration. After German reunification in 1990, the Palast continued producing revues as a state-funded theatre in Berlin, but harvested globally traveling references to create images, transform the meanings of its practices, and de-ideologise the theatrical experiences it rendered. While the Palast remained a locally operating institution, it increasingly adopted what it perceived as global show entertainment. As will be further scrutinised below, the entertainment and resort city of Las Vegas in Nevada served as an anchor for the Palast to first adopt narratives and show ideas from local productions, and later to attain a level of standardisation in production regimes previously unknown in Palast practice.

President Bush's question to me—whether I earned any money from working at the Palast—relates to the economic realities of post-reunification show theatre. While I came to understand President Gorbachev's remark as him reminiscing about a certain aesthetic value in transfer, I connect President Bush's elevator remarks to what is now regarded as commercially viable entertainment. Whereas, during the times of the GDR, the productions' aesthetics were an expression of the ideological context and rehearsed social relations of the socialist system, the post-reunification revue had to be increasingly profitable to continue, that is, speak to an audience larger than the former GDR citizens. Nowadays, the theatre is owned by the city of Berlin and, in 2016, received €7.5m in subsidies, which covered about 20 percent of its costs. The subsidies are meant to support the 'preservation and further development of the art form of the revue' (Friedrichstadt-Palast, 2017:[online]). It is also meant to help maintain the Palast's youth ensemble, which is made up of 250 children who train dancing, singing, and acting at the Palast, rehearse and stage their own shows in the set of the main revue every year.⁴ In 2016, 468,352 guests saw a show at the Friedrichstadt-Palast, which means that 87.2 percent of the seats were sold. The total revenue of 2016 amounted to €22.2m. This made the Friedrichstadt-Palast the most frequented and highest grossing theatre in Germany (ibid).

The theatre's approach to both the reappraisal of East German culture and the global show form the main pivot points of this chapter: since reunification, the Palast has used its Las Vegas allusions to divert

⁴ It was founded by the Palast's first post-war director Marion Spadoni in 1945 and has existed without interruption until today. Grouped according to age, the children assume roles designed to fit their capabilities. Training and rehearsals take place all year. In recent years, the Palast received several awards and prizes for their outstanding work with children.

attention from its own past, which remained largely unacknowledged. On a surface level, this could be understood as what literary theorist Paul de Man described as the 'idea of modernity', which is:

a desire to wipe out whatever came earlier, in the hope of reaching at last a point that would be called a true present, a point of origin that marks a new departure. This combined interplay of deliberate forgetting with an action that is also a new origin reaches the full power of the idea of modernity. (1970:388-189)

In trying to avoid a form of historicism that would openly rely on the institution's East German past, the theatre developed global aspirations instead. But the 'deliberate forgetting' is challenged by performance's unintentional recycling. In fact, with the loss of the East German ideological circumstances in 1990, the theatrical strategies of Marxist practices of acquisition and appropriation lost their signifying context and become paradigmatic of the Friedrichstadt-Palast's revue. They have become unconscious, tacit repetitions underneath the Palast's attempts to go global. In his work on Yugoslav performance during the socialist and post-socialist period, Branislav Jakovljević also describes this transfer of performance across ideological boundaries.⁵ Jakovljević observes that when performance transitioned from socialist into post-socialist societies, its form changed from 'principle', that is, 'a law discerned through analysis' (2016:25), to 'paradigm', that is, 'a foundational design' (ibid). At the Palast, what had been ideological devices of performance during the times of socialism have become conventions that still exist underneath the contemporary allusions to the global show. Jakovljević shows that what is not remembered, can still be performed. In fact, it can be owed to the ideology's vanishing that such performance conventions still exist, precisely because they are not marked as Marxist any more, but have become conventions that nowadays respond to contemporary ways of cultural production and, in fact, weaken the Palast's conscious doings. In this sense, this chapter understands the Palast's current practice as a 'post-socialist' practice that emerged out of 45 years of ideological formation under socialism and was then absorbed into a pre-existing German democracy.

Although this dissertation has so far mainly focused on the past, the need emerges to re-examine the Palast's present development in the light of the knowledge that this thesis recovered, because this knowledge, or memory, currently stands in the shadows of the theatre's turn to the global as a ramification

⁵ In the case of Yugoslav socialist culture, Jakovljević argues, the principle of self-management has become a cultural paradigm in the country's post-soviet time.

of its specific dealing with its East German legacy. Socialist principles have become post-socialist paradigms. To make visible again the cultural continuities and stage practices as ongoing, this chapter proposes to re-think this development by considering the Palast's contemporary performance. In chapter 1, I argued that the Palast's reworked practices became increasingly illegible, which I attributed to an increased abstraction of repeating underlying ideas on a conscious level. In this chapter, the illegibility argument is further complicated by making visible the various unconscious ideas and practices that are at play when performance crosses ideologies and thus impacted linear time. Understanding German reunification as a distinct political and cultural break implies a particular kind of linearity that denies a return of East Germaness. The consensual denial of cultural continuities across political eras reflects a view of history as both biological and teleological. The periodicity of political time in Germany is imagined as being subject to the dying of a political system, in this case socialism, and implies that the 'death' of this system must involve the termination of its culture and ways of thinking. But performance, as Jakovljević has also observed, works across ideological confines and thus challenges attempts at strict periodisations. In the next section, I will analyse the Palast's contemporary revue practice which started under director Berndt Schmidt in 2007 and is marked by an outspoken turn to the global show and the Las Vegas production show in particular. I trace the historical development of the Las Vegas dream, which I understand as a new set of stage practices that have started to reshape the Palast's practice post-reunification. This chapter starts a conversation of how the knowledge that this dissertation has produced can be productive for the institution's forthcoming work.

4.1. The contemporary Palast revue

In order to historicise the contemporary Palast revue and to examine both the post-socialist performance paradigms and the Palast's Las Vegas allusions, I will go back to where the first chapter started, which is at the beginning of Berndt Schmidt's directorship in 2007 and the institution's ensuing turn to what he termed 'pure show entertainment' (Friedrichstadt-Palast, 2008a:[online]). *Qi—A Palace Phantasy* was the first new show produced under his leadership. It premiered in October 2008 and entailed a shift in aesthetics that was framed by the institution's turn to the global show in a manner that had been unprecedented. The situation Schmidt inherited was unthinkable bad: when in 2006, *Rhythmus Berlin* ('Rhythm of Berlin') could

not meet audience expectations, the steep decline in ticket sales resulted in both a new director for the Palast, Schmidt, and a loan of €3.5m in order to cover the losses.⁶ *Rhythmus* was a book revue about finding love in Berlin that was inspired by the Walter Ruttmann movie *Berlin—Die Symphonie einer Großstadt* from 1927. *Rhythmus Berlin*, as well as its intended successor, a book revue based on Jules Verne's *Around the World in Eighty Days*, were cancelled. Instead, Schmidt returned to 'what we can do best' (in Kirschner, 2008:[online]): variety programmes, which are 'no field for experimentation with an educational mandate' (ibid) and should thus refrain from drawing on historical cultural texts. The return to variety theatre, however, entailed a paradigmatic return to past cultural practices of performance acquisition and appropriation. *Rhythmus Berlin*'s successor *Qi* started the Palast's aesthetic modernisation, which meant that it was geared at the largest possible audience to compensate past falls in attendance figures: the show did not have a linear narrative; its idea was an appropriation of the Chinese philosophy of life energy and power; its aesthetics were based on Western pop cultural spectacle; and some of its dances were choreographed by North American music video choreographers.⁷

Qi presented several dance tableaux set to adaptations of popular music, while using the Palast's technical capabilities, like the apron lifts, the water pool, an ice arena, and a water curtain. *Qi* 'is the name of a world' (Friedrichstadt-Palast, 2008c:[online]) that was visually framed by an LED cyclorama designed by stage designer Heinz Hauser (see image 4.04). In its enormous dimensions, it once again celebrated the dimensions of the Palast's stage that could easily fit 32 kickline girls in a row (see image 4.03). Like parentheses, the dark yet illuminated backdrop provided the canvas for the Palast's revue vocabulary to be given a contemporary make-over, but it was also the backdrop for the appropriation of global cultural references. The backdrop's LED lines, for example, structured the space above the stage and visually narrated a shift in emphasis towards the incorporation of aerial circus practices at the price of lesser dance tableaux.⁸ The Russian trapeze act 'The Flying Cranes' was the highlight of the second act and the

⁶ On 10 September 2008, the Palast informed the public that the main committee of the city's House of Representatives had agreed to grant a loan over €3.5m (Friedrichstadt-Palast, 2008b:[online]). The Palast was meant to amortize the loan between 2011 and 2020 (ibid), but was able to pay back the loan, including interest, by the end of 2017 (ibid, 2017:[online]).

⁷ For example, Sean Cheesman choreographed for Janet Jackson, Prince, Tina Turner, Whitney Houston, and Britney Spears.

⁸ While *Qi*'s predecessor *Rhythmus Berlin* had three circus acts, *Qi* had incorporated into the show Steve Wheeler's Magic on Ice show comprising 10 tableaux, plus an additional 5 circus acts spread out across the show.

appropriation of their act epitomises how the Palast had handled global references in *Qi*. Originally, 'The Flying Cranes' 'used dramatic devices to tell the story of fallen Soviet war heroes whose souls are transformed into cranes. The acrobats fly through the air in white costumes, highlighted by dramatic theatrical lighting and smoke' (Parkinson, 2017:[online]). In *Qi*'s programme booklet, this context was reduced to a purely technical vocabulary erasing the geographic, historical, and cultural contexts altogether: '[t]hey combine elements of ballet, traditional trapeze artistic, contemporary choreography, and classical theatre' (Friedrichstadt-Palast, 2008d:cast sheet). Significantly, neither the troupe's original Soviet context, nor *Qi*'s asserted pan-Asian practices are mentioned on the list. In the show, their act was eventually accompanied by video projections of animated origami cranes (deliberately borrowing from a pan-Asian imaginary without embedding it in specific cultural contexts) and their act was musically accompanied by a suite by German composer Frank Nimsgern, which reworked the musical leitmotif of *Qi*. The Russian trapeze act was adapted into the aesthetic fabric of *Qi*, which meant that the act's original contents were musically and visually replaced by the design markers of the abstract 'world of *Qi*'.



IMAGE 4.02. *Qi-Eine Palast-Phantasie*. Opening: A revue-esque rendition of 'Boogey Wonderland' by Earth, Wind & Fire.

Schmidt emphasised that the show's creators, long-time Palast stage director Jürgen Nass and dramaturge Roland Welke, found their inspiration 'for set designs and costumes in the world-class shows by Kylie Minogue, Madonna, or Celine Dion, who themselves have consistently picked up on classic revue references' (Friedrichstadt-Palast, 2008a:[online]). Schmidt regards this practice of the global pop show as ultimately revue-esque. In the press kit handed out to participants of the opening night, the information about the Friedrichstadt-Palast theatre equated the acquisition of pop-cultural references as 'the continuation of the great tradition of the Berlin revue' (Friedrichstadt-Palast, 2008e:1), but omitted any indication as to which history of the Berlin revue they were referring to—the Weimar revue, the East German revue, or some unspecific Berlin revue imaginary that encompassed anything from Sally Bowles to the modern Berlin cabarets, like Chamäleon Theater or the Wintergarten Berlin?⁹ Instead of historicising what it does, the institution framed its identity in terms of stage practice, like the acquisition and appropriation of cultural markers, which its practitioners perceived as ultimately eponymous with the Berlin revue and thus naturalised. But at the same time, they failed to reference the history of both the practices and their specific composition (i.e. the order and manner in which these practices appear in the revue). They worked their way around the naming of names and places, and instead foregrounded the new-found presentness of pop-cultural aesthetics.



IMAGES 4.03-04. 'Qi-Eine Palast-Phantasie' 4.03. The Friedrichstadt-Palast girls. **4.04.** Finale tableau 'Qiarneval'.

⁹ The Chamäleon is a variety theatre in the Hackesche Höfe in Berlin Mitte, formerly East Berlin. Founded in 1991, it connects to a tradition of 1920s ballroom culture. It offers sit-down entertainments (320 seats) in the form of contemporary circus and variety programmes. The contemporary Wintergarten variety theatre shares a name with the famous Berlin theatre that was destroyed in 1944, but does not stand in a direct lineage with it. It was founded in 1992 in West Berlin, has a 500 seat capacity, and provides variety entertainments and magic shows.

The direction of this transfer of references and practices is noteworthy, because it differs from other global entertainments of the time. Megamusicals, for example, are Broadway-style musical theatre productions that travel the globe and are 'designed and created in order to be reproducible in an international context, ignoring any locally grounded performance practices in the process' (Krebs, 2010:43). Similarly, the above-mentioned shows by pop stars like Kylie Minogue or Madonna usually reference the multiple virtual ages of the pop star, which are generally linked to their albums and the ensuing change of identity and aesthetics, and acquire global references to fit these ages.¹⁰ These ready-made productions are taken on tour globally and function like megamusicals as they too ignore local performance practices. Palast-shows, however, are local entertainments that are embedded in vernacular histories and expose distinct performance practices. Global references are made local in the cultural fabric of the theatre's long and troubled history. In *Qi*, however, the practitioners strove to keep these references as abstract and thus as globally appealing as possible, in order to increase the number of potential audiences. But, at a closer look, the underlying performance practices expose long-rehearsed performance paradigms.

At the beginning of *Qi*, the apron curtain (a curtain that divided the auditorium from the apron) was lifted and the apron lift emanated out of the dark understage. Image 4.02 shows this moment. On the stage lift, a glittery revue staircase in the form of Yin or Yan (the actual meaning did not seem to matter as it was a mere appropriation of the form) was populated by dancers in skimpy leather outfits; male dancers showed noticeably more skin than their female counterparts. Pheasant feathers, usually associated with traditional revue girls, were now worn by the men of the corps du ballet and were coloured in black and red. The revue staircase was fitted with silver metal leaf and light emanated through rows of dots from inside the body of the staircase as if it were alive. The abstract framing of the LED panels in the background grounded it in modern music video aesthetics. As the lift arrived at stage level, the opening song's beat kicked in, the staircase moved upstage, the bodies on the staircase started to move and presented their first dance to an upbeat version of Earth, Wind & Fire's song 'Boogey Wonderland'.

This was also when *Qi* became a revue extravaganza again: the presentation of the dance was overseen by the singer, personified as the diva by Katja Berg, who remained at the top of the staircase and

¹⁰ On postmodern techniques of identity construction in pop-musical spectacles of Kylie Minogue, see Barron, 2008.

formed the visual centre of the tableau. From tableau to tableau, the show presented performances on ice, in the water basin, and in the falling water of a rain curtain. The throughline was not a narrativised succession of events, but rather based on alternating visual effects to build what the Palast had defined as the world of *Qi*. In this regard, *Qi* was structurally not too different from the number revues of the Palast's past. Like most revues in the past, *Qi* also had a tango, a tap dance, several acrobatic dances, and fused circus performance with ballet practice.¹¹ The positioning of key elements of the Palast revue, like the circus acts (e.g., one in each first quarter of each act, the highlight act, i.e. The Flying Cranes, second to last before the kickline and the revue's finale) was no different to what had existed before. In *Qi*, however, each of these numbers was now its own tableau. It had been quite common in the past that a revue consisted of four tableaux into which the dances and circus performances were fitted.¹² *Qi*'s visual frame allowed the show to be regarded as one comprehensive world that regarded different kinds of physical practice as the confines of its tableaux. This implies a heightened sense for a visual narrative that applies to every act throughout the whole show, and thus relates to the global show and its experiential qualities. The strategy of plethora was appreciated by the press: 'the most colossal, most fantastic, and most sensual flood of impressions that you have ever seen at this theatre' (n.a., 2008:[online]). Consequently, the Palast rhetorically broke with its own history by changing the name of its productions from 'revue' (i.e. a set of stage practices) to 'show' (i.e. an emphasis on mostly visual elements) and thereby leaving unacknowledged the distinct local histories of the genre. Although it was still a revue at its core, *Qi* was also different in terms of its modern production values, its abstract designs, and lack of narrative. The acquisition of global references and the abstracted pop-cultural imaginary was well received across the German media. *Die Welt*, a West German conservative daily newspaper, thought that '*Qi* is an actual explosion of a fantastic imagination...An aesthetic surprise, oscillating between a cool monumentality and a picturesque blaze of colour' (Wengierek, 2008:[online]). Even more so than *Qi*, the subsequent shows further obscured the institution's past, but at the same time developed the institution's global aspirations. According to the Palast's marketing, Las Vegas was now in Berlin.

¹¹ As I have pointed out in chapter 2, this was also common practice in the 1960s and 70s.

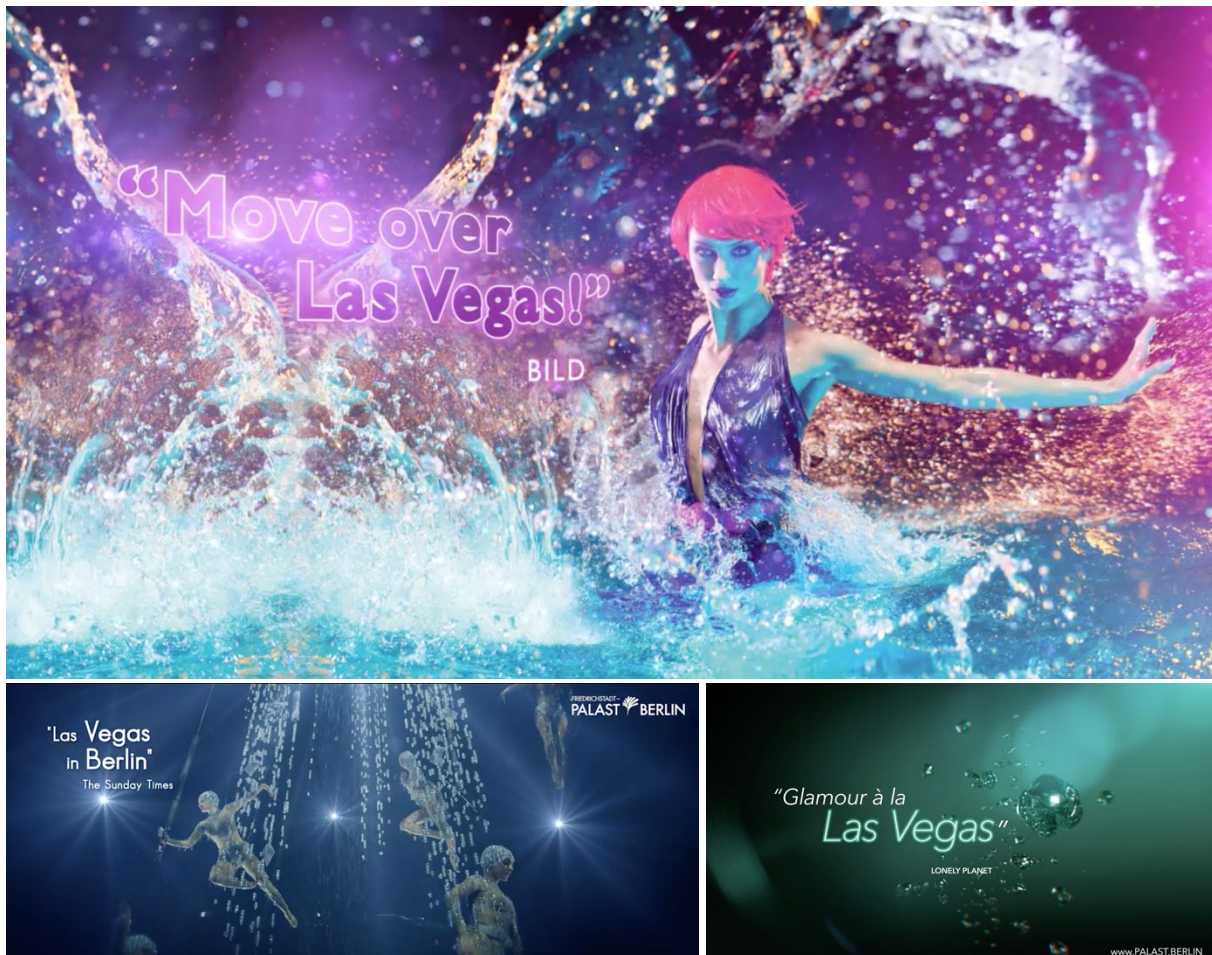
¹² See the discussions of *Traumvisionen* and *Elements* as examples.

4.1.1. 'Las Vegas in Berlin'

The contemporary allusions to 'Las Vegas' remain broad and general if they are not considered in their historical development. Although the Palast already began to use 'Las Vegas' references as a means of imagining a form of revue that mediated a conscious detachment of the Palast from its socialist past during the 1990s, these allusions differ in their stage manifestations from the Palast's contemporary approach to 'Las Vegas'. These early post-reunification revues had not yet been framed as global, but as having been inspired by local Las Vegas production shows. Between the revue productions of the 1990s and the 2010s, the 'Las Vegas' allusions at the Palast evolved into rather dislocated aesthetic relations, where 'Las Vegas' was an anchor for values, rather than an actual place. Despite this earlier timeline, I start considering the 'Las Vegas' trajectory with regards to how it functions in the present. I would thereby like to reflect the ways in which the Palast historicises its identity, which means that it does not account for its own GDR past. The Palast looks at its own history as a history of distinct breaks that are not only related to the political history of the country, but also relate to the institution's own history. Since Berndt Schmidt assumed office in 2007, the recoding of the Palast's revue practice has been termed 'revuelution' (Friedrichstadt-Palast, 2009:[online]) by the Palast's marketing department. It is a neologism that comprises 'revue' and 'revolution', and implies that the break with the past is so profound that the past somehow does not matter anymore. This rhetoric suggests that the Palast revue did not just evolve, but revolved and revolted against its own history. The press archive on the theatre's website, for example, starts with the announcement of *Qi* in early 2008. References to its history remain broad, forging a focus on the present-day activities. In this way, the Palast in its own historicisation marks the moment when another set of practices started coming in and its product was hence 'pure show entertainment', not 'revue extravaganza' anymore.

In this recent timeline, *Qi* set the precedent for the modern Palast show to be understood as aspects of a global aesthetic. After the premiere of *Qi* in 2008, Governing Mayor of Berlin Klaus Wowereit was quoted rating the show as 'Better than Las Vegas' (in Friedrichstadt-Palast, 2008f:[online]). Since then, the Palast's claim to be global has consistently been tantamount to being comparable to Las Vegas shows, but at the same time, its statements also remain confusing and express contradictory news as to how 'Las Vegas' would become settled in Berlin. Since *Qi*, promotional videos for new shows have repeatedly used press claims like 'Las Vegas in Berlin' (by the British *Sunday Times*, see image 4.6). They have suggested a fusion

of cultural frames of reference to insinuate something that is other than Las Vegas, but also not quite Berlin. Other claims insinuated the adoption of production processes that create 'Glamour à la Las Vegas' (by the Lonely Planet city guide, see image 4.07), only in Berlin.¹³ In a more general way, the fantasy of 'Las Vegas'—whether this means the place, a show in that place, or even a show about that place remains vaguely open—has been used by the Palast to emphasise its modern realignment.



IMAGES 4.05-07. The global revue in Berlin. Trailer title cards. 4.05. *Show:Me* announcement trailer (2014): 'Move over Las Vegas.' **4.06.** *The Wyld* trailer (2014): 'Las Vegas is Berlin.' **4.07.** *THE ONE Grand Show* trailer (2016): 'Glamour à la Las Vegas.'

In the light of the Palast's stale situation that Schmidt inherited in 2007, the Palast's modernisation, i.e. its creative and financial recovery after *Rhythmus Berlin*, seemingly started this new time line of Palast practice. And on the surface, this is true. But below the apparent aesthetic renewal, performance paradigms

¹³ None of these claims could be validated through specific research in press archives. The Lonely Planet guide, for example, describes the Palast by evoking historical ideas about cabaret and revue: 'glitzy-glam Vegas-style variety shows with leggy showgirls, singing, elaborate costuming, a high-tech stage, mind-boggling special effects and abundant artistry' (n.a., n.d.a:[online]), not as 'Glamour à la Las Vegas'.

operate that still link the contemporary Palast revues to the institution's socialist history. To anticipate the further course of this analysis, I argue that the claims to be global needs to be seen as extending the history of Marxist cultural appropriation. These principles—analysed in this thesis under the names of 'prospective consciousness', 'socialist virtuosity', and 'techno-futurism'—have become some of the Palast's performance paradigms with the help of which the Palast creates the very materiality of its 'Las Vegas' references.

If we start by understanding 'Las Vegas' as a series of relations that form both production processes and distinct aesthetics as a dislocated moment of (or an anchor for) the global imaginary of show theatrical production (as the claim 'Glamour à la Las Vegas' insinuates), then the players in Las Vegas's cultural fabric should be considered, as they seem to be the ones that produce the Palast's contemporary templates for cultural production. At the moment, the display of contemporary circus practices is the most common theatrical form to be displayed on the Las Vegas Strip. In 2016, and six years after *Qi* finished its run in 2010, large-scale Las Vegas sit-down entertainments comprised seven shows by the Quebec-based circus company Cirque du Soleil, who is the most notorious representative of contemporary Las Vegas show entertainment,¹⁴ *Le Rêve* (a water spectacle by Franco Dragone), the Blue Man Group, and several resident shows by pop stars.¹⁵ In terms of the Palast, the connection to Las Vegas is therefore not one that primarily concerns the circus as such, but the display of spectacular bodies in high-tech stage environments. In his study of Las Vegas's culture of spectacle, William L. Fox states that a signature aspect of these shows 'is the use of scripts that evoke narrative and character without specifying them' (Fox, 2005:122). The lack of spoken language requires bodies and scenographies to create enough material to enable audience members to follow an idea, rather than a casual succession of dramatized events. 'This approach,' Fox argues, 'creates a mystery for the audience, a mood that is encouraged by original scores...You find yourself attempting to create a linear storyline by imagining a relationship from act to act, a very seductive and participatory process' (ibid). This pattern also applies to Palast shows, except that they primarily focus on the dancing body. In terms of performance, however, both destinations exhibit similar and idiosyncratic approaches towards the acquisition of practice.

¹⁴ *The Beatles LOVE*, *Michael Jackson ONE*, *Mystère*, *KÁ*, *O*, *Zarkana*, *Zumanity*.

¹⁵ For example, Britney Spear's *Piece of Me*, Jennifer Lopez's *All I Have*, Mariah Carey's *#1 to Infinity*, Celine Dion, Cher, Ricky Martin, amongst others.

Cirque du Soleil has produced several sit-down shows in Las Vegas and additionally operates several touring productions around the globe. In terms of production values and audience reach, Karen Fricker has argued that 'Cirque is setting the terms by which live performance is defined worldwide' (2008:128). Consequently, Cirque du Soleil has increasingly found itself being criticised as producing show entertainment that appeals to the greatest possible audience and 'whose work is purposely culturally about nothing' (Fricker, 2008:131). Such broad criticism falls under a more generic critique of global theatre and has been described by Dan Rebellato as the danger of homogenisation through standardising the uniqueness of each performance by playing the same show every night at a given venue.¹⁶ Erin Hurley has described Cirque's global aesthetic by outlining the ramification of homogenisation: 'Cirque's global international casts costumed in otherworldly garb moving to world-beat music and sacrificing individual recognition to the greater importance of "the show"' (2016:71).

While a common misconception about Cirque du Soleil has been framed around its global appeal—that is, that it 'emerges from a virtual ahistorical land' (Jacob, 2006:223) and demonstrates the unfortunate globalisation of the circus—more recent research has focussed on how this global appeal emerges from what circus scholar Louis Patrick Leroux has described as Québécois circus, which is 'mostly animal-free, contemporary circus born out of French nouveau cirque, Soviet-inspired elite acrobatic training, and American entrepreneurship and showmanship' (Leroux, 2016a:8). Based in Montreal, Canada, Cirque du Soleil is surrounded by a circus infrastructure that comprises the National Circus School (École nationale de cirque de Montréal) and other circus companies, like Cirque Éloize or Les 7 doigts de la main. Leroux has argued that both the aestheticism and aesthetics that Cirque is known for today is a specifically Québécois reinvention of a tradition in which circus companies 'sought to break away from explicit circus codes, drawing on vocabulary of theatre and dance' (in Leroux, 2016a:8). Historically, he argues, this was possible because

Quebec's relative inexperience with traditional forms of circus allowed it to transgress accepted forms and traditions, drawing on what various cultures and national traditions had to offer without having to content with high cultural capital and expectations. (Leroux, 2016b:42)

¹⁶ For homogenization of global theatre, see Rebellato, 2009.

The perceived deterritorialisation of Cirque's Québécois labour is in fact one aspect of a globalised arts market, in which Cirque's practices have become reterritorialised in the cultural fabric of Las Vegas.¹⁷ In terms of globalisation, deterritorialisation can be understood as a decentering, or a taking out of context of cultural knowledge, while reterritorialisation describes the cultural processes by which said knowledge is made local again, most often in another geographical and cultural context.¹⁸ In their writings on globalisation, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri have described that the passage of social production and exchange from the global to the local is framed by globally operating 'regulatory mechanisms' (2000:xii). Although the Cirque-style production regimen that Karen Fricker described can be seen as erasing territorial boundaries, the very process of this exchange is worth considering as it emphasises the importance of local theatre practice. In this respect, while the circus is deterritorialised from Quebec, it is at the same time reterritorialized in Las Vegas's cultural fabric. This comes at the cost of losing cultural specificity.¹⁹

The major difference between the Palast revues of the 2010s and Las Vegas's show entertainments of the same time period is rooted in the direction of this exchange of references and practices in reference to the global stage. While companies like Cirque du Soleil export their cultural products around the globe (to deterritorialise), the Palast acquires what it perceives as global references in order to keep them in Berlin and incorporate them into their cultural fabric (to reterritorialize). This process, as Hardt and Negri suggested, 'sets in play mobile and modulating circuits of differentiation and identification' (2000:45) that, as I have described above, are interpreted through local cultures and discourses of identity. While the Palast might identify itself with the global show, the reliance of early 1990s models of reappraisal after reunification forms an obstacle to fully admit the existence of the local revue history in the reterritorialisation of global practices. In their announcement of *Qi* as a show that borrowed references from pop culture and the global show, the Palast acknowledged that 'both the Friedrichstadtpalast and its perception of revue are unique in

¹⁷ It is important to stress here, that I am referring to the resident shows in Las Vegas, not to the globally touring entertainments that Cirque also provides. In following Leroux's analysis, I argue that the processes of making Québécois labour local in Las Vegas required a specific place and a distinct culture of performance in that place.

¹⁸ For re- and deterritorialisation, see Hardt & Negri, 2000:295.

¹⁹ This results in the presence of Quebec circus on most continents, with its most lavish and technologically excellent shows to be found in Las Vegas. However, since 2011, the most technologically advanced shows of a Québécois origin are based in China, *The House of Dancing Waters* in Macau, and *The Han Show* in Wuhan. Both shows were conceived and directed by former Cirque director Franco Dragone, have employed part of the creative staff of Cirque and strive for a similar aesthetic.

the world,' (Friedrichstadt-Palast, 2008c:[online]) without ever specifying what this uniqueness was based on. Assuming that this uniqueness encompasses the genre's history, then this timeline is never acknowledged, but only celebrates the theatre's modernisation. None of the press releases since *Qi* have tried to further describe the Palast's own identity as rooted in a specifically Berlin (let alone East German) revue tradition, but have instead pointed to the global. The trailers' title cards displayed above illustrate this development towards the global. *Show:Me* (2012-2014) was claimed to be 'largest ensuite show in the world with more than 100 performers,' (Friedrichstadt-Palast, 2012:[online]) and the 2014 show *The Wyld*, which cost the Palast €10m, was announced as 'the most expensive production show outside of Las Vegas' (Friedrichstadt-Palast, 2014c:[online]). Global references are thus conceived of as new. The cultural and theatrical practices by which the reterritorialisation, that is, the acquisition, is facilitated remain unacknowledged. This impacts the theatre's institutional condition as it has ramifications for how it treats its own history and what it thinks it represents in the present.

These claims to the global were also underpinned by claims for originality. In 2012, the Palast's creative director Roland Welke said that '[w]e are obligated to consistently surprise our audience, which means we must reinvent both ourselves and our genre' (ibid). Every new show seems like a new answer to how these global references are acquired, which implies that the theatre constantly re-negotiates what it understands as revue without ever openly talking about its past and what this reinvention specifically entails. In keeping with this reinvention narrative, the productions have been referred to as 'Grand Shows' (Friedrichstadt-Palast, 2014c:[online]) since *The Wyld* (2014). The label suggests a blend of the French 'revue' and the Las Vegas kind of 'production show'. This signifies how the Palast historicised its own practice, as this re-naming relates to the above-mentioned timeline and virtually fuses the French beginnings and global, or Las Vegas, present of the Friedrichstadt-Palast revue. The most recent production even has the label in its name: *THE ONE Grand Show* (premiered in October 2016) seemingly aims at establishing this label as a brand that is specifically unique to the Friedrichstadt-Palast. Appropriately enough, director Schmidt sees this kind of revue now even exceeding any comparison with the global show:

Jean Paul Gaultier [who designed the revue's costumes, A/N] exceeds everything we have done before. More than 500 of such incomprehensively mad and expensive bespoke costumes have never been seen together on one stage. Not in New York, not in Paris, not even in Las Vegas. (Friedrichstadt-Palast, 2017:[online])

Still, the local practices that enable the Palast to develop such global references and adapt them, their histories, as well their modes of operation remain vague.

To sum up, 'Las Vegas in Berlin' nowadays stands for two processes. First, it relates to the practices that appropriate the global show into the cultural fabric of Berlin. Second, by adopting external elements it changes local performance practices. The 'revuelution' of 2008 is a cunning way of narrating history, but it obscures the institution's history at the cost of the legibility of practices and influences, as it does not understand the present through the prism of the past.

4.1.2. 'For us, only Las Vegas matters!': The Palast post-reunification

About a decade before the recent turn to a dislocated moment of 'Las Vegas', there was a much more localised appreciation of the Las Vegas production show and its themes. Just as the Palast's contemporary Las Vegas allusions, this prior development was started after a series of unsuccessful revues just after reunification and was about a set of specific shows and references. Reading the Palast's shows from the 1990s cross-temporally, that is, keeping in mind what came before (the East German revue) and after (the global post-socialist revue), starts a way of thinking about the legibility of its continued practices that will be useful for the next section. The shows of the 1990s help us to see how socialist ideas and Las Vegas aesthetics have worked together in the past and are thus evidence that the Palast's contemporary involvement with Las Vegas is grounded in its institutional history and is in fact another aspect of continuation that the Palast, however, refutes in its own historiography of breaks and the afore-mentioned 'revuelution'. It is noteworthy that this development happened with principally the same people. When German was reunited, the same crew continued the theatre's operations: directors remained in position, dancers who finished their active stage careers started occupying other positions in the theatre, like associate directors or stage managers, while performers and creatives from West-Berlin theatre, like the Theater des Westens, also began to work at the Palast.

After the reunification of Germany in 1990, under the direction of Julian Herrey (1992-1993), the Palast initially struggled to find its new identity in a Germany that turned towards a free market economy. When *City Lights*—a revue that visited the four classical revue cities of Vienna, New York, Paris, and Berlin—premiered in 1991 as a guest performance in Frankfurt, it was received well by West German

audiences and thus entered the Palast repertoire as a new sit-down show a year later. In 1993, *Jazzleggs* was designed to stage classics of American jazz in great revue tableaux, hailing back to the film revues of the 1930s and 1940s. Central to both concepts was the acquisition of a global revue canon, which was appropriated by the performers of the Palast and a thematic succession of both places (as in *City Lights*) and time periods (as in *Jazzleggs*). However, the appeal of these reconstructions faltered, as former Palast creative director Roland Welke indicated, because *Jazzleggs* 'lacked highlights and vibe' (Welke, 2009:52). The impact was enormous, on some days not even 5 percent of the seats were sold (Zöllner, 1999:[online]).

The turn from socialist to capitalist conditions in the early 1990s was framed by the city's urge to privatise the theatre and put it up for sale for 16 million marks (approx. 5.4m GBP at today's rates) (McElvoy, 1991: n.p.). The impending privatisation fanned fears about a new aesthetic imperative that apparently came with the imminent capitalist revue. In a strike in 1991, the Palast's dancers demanded a pay rise with simultaneous consideration of how the theatre's artistic integrity could be retained under capitalist conditions. Dancers were 'threatening to hang up their ostrich feathers in a dispute over privatisation plans, which they fear will force them to flash more flesh for not enough money' (ibid). These fears can be seen as a rhetorical echo from the socialist class war against capitalism as they extend the ideology's prejudices against western influences. Alexander Iljinskij, the theatre's artistic director at the time, remarked that '[w]e only show bosoms where they are an integral and tasteful part of the routine. I am afraid that there are some out there who would like to get their hands on us and who think that more bosoms equal bigger audiences' (quoted in ibid). Eventually, the Palast became a state-owned theatre, Iljinskij became the theatre's general director, and the capitalist imperative of increased nudity that he had feared was mitigated by the Palast's global outreach to a specific place: Las Vegas and its fantastic production shows of the early 1990s.

Under the direction of Alexander Iljinskij (general director from 1993-2004), the Friedrichstadt-Palast brought about a change towards a type of revue that looked to 'Las Vegas' for inspiration. In an interview from 1999, he was asked where the modern Friedrichstadt-Palast gained its inspiration, from whereupon he admitted that, 'For us, only Las Vegas matters' (in Hosfeld et al., 1999:29). Shows under his direction included *Sterne* ('Stars', 1995), *Joker* (1997), *Elements* (1999), *Wunderbar – Die 2002. Nacht* ('Arabian Nights', 2002), and *Hexen* ('Witches', 2004). Many of these revues relied on narratives of myths and fairy tales, as opposed to surveying local revue histories during the time of the GDR. Compared to his

predecessor Julian Herrey's revues, which reconstructed revue practices in relation to a perceived place or time of origin, the Iljinskij revues told remarkably un-revuesque stories. This shift from reconstructing revue history towards pagan myths can be regarded as the Palast finding inspiration in the Las Vegas production show of the time, such as Siegfried and Roy's shows or *EFX*.



IMAGE 4.08. *Siegfried & Roy at the Mirage.*

Siegfried & Roy, a German magician duo, are in fact a specifically (West) German link to entertainment in Las Vegas. After several appearances in Las Vegas revues, they began a new phase of Las Vegas entertainment with their magic show *Beyond Belief*, which premiered at the New Frontier Hotel and Casino in 1981. Their follow-up show *Siegfried and Roy at the Mirage Hotel and Resort*, produced by Kenneth Feld, premiered in 1990 at Steve Wynn's resort (image 4.08). The Mirage was the most expensive casino resort and added to the Strip 'the dimension of fantasy embodied in its title in a new and spectacular way at a cost of \$500 million more than any previous casino resort' (Rothman, 2002:328). Keeping up with the superlatives, the show extended Wynn's aspiration of 'fantasy become reality' (ibid) as a theme through the means of show theatrical display and was the most expensive production show at the time (Sendker,

2005:[online]). The aesthetics of Siegfried and Roy's show was built on the imagery of Boris Vallejo, a Peruvian artist who painted hyper-real and hyper-sexualised depictions of barbarians and beast-tamers. Correspondingly, Siegfried and Roy's signature feature was a spectacular mix of performing magic tricks amidst tiger-taming performances. The slick high-tech show 'invented a reality that only rarely required the suspension of disbelief' (ibid). Cultural critic Dave Hickey described their shows as 'at once a seamless spectacle and a plausible, subversive conflation of Wagner, Barnum, Houdini, Rousseau, Pink Floyd, Fantasia, Peter Pan and A Midsummer Night's Dream' (1997:173). Despite the obvious tendency towards cultural acquisition, columnist Cindi Reed argued that 'Siegfried and Roy were the first original entertainment in Las Vegas history, paving the way for all that came after' (2013:[online]). Considering that Las Vegas entertainment until then had been defined by adaptations from the American East Coast (singers like The Rat Pack or Elvis) or Europe (like re-imaginings of classic revues), the Siegfried and Roy shows were rooted in a new visual fantasy that combined the spectacular visuals of beast-tamers, fire, and glittery rhinestone costumes.



IMAGES 4.09. EFX at the MGM Grand.

Theatrical entertainments picked up on this trend. *EFX*, for example, was a high-tech show about the celebration of magical characters in the Western imaginary, like Merlin, Houdini, or P. T. Barnum (image

4.09). It opened at the MGM Grand Hotel & Casino in 1995. Like Siegfried & Roy's show at the Mirage, *EFX* was dominated by high-tech illusions and special effects that were meant as an extension of the casino complex's superlatives, which was the world's largest at the time. Having cost \$41m, *EFX* was the most expensive theatrical presentation to date (Dretzka, 1995:[online]). The show starred Michael Crawford in its opening season and was marketed as being quintessentially Las Vegas. Gary Dretzka of the Chicago Tribune was convinced that 'EFX Out-vegases Las Vegas' (ibid), while a poster read: 'Miss it and you miss Las Vegas' (MGM Grand, n.d.:[online]). Siegfried & Roy's shows and *EFX* were agents of a new kind of Las Vegas entertainment in the city's pre-Cirque du Soleil era. These production shows increasingly distanced themselves from the reconstructions of the Parisian revue imaginary, as had been commonplace in Las Vegas during the 1970s and 1980s. Sarah Feldberg, former editor-in-chief of the Las Vegas Weekly, has recently argued that 'Vegas tends to go through eras of entertainment' (in Cragg, 2016:[online]). While the revues featuring topless showgirls and classical revue imaginary—like *Lido de Paris* at the Stardust (1955-1992), the *Las Vegas: Follies Bergeres* at the Tropicana (1959-2009), or Don Arden's *Jubilee!* at the MGM Grand Hotel & Casino (later Bally's, 1981-2016)—still performed, new sit-down entertainments, like the shows by Siegfried & Roy and *EFX*, increasingly turned towards magic and fantasy during the 1980s and 1990s. These later Las Vegas productions preceded the Palast's turning away from the classical revue towards the production show. The Palast could easily have used the Las Vegas revues of Parisian imaginary as an inspiration for the post-socialist show in Berlin. But, in line with the institution's understanding of East German memory constests, the revue was appropriated away from its formerly sentimental depictions and, at least visually and thematically, brought into line with the mentioned fantasy spectacles of Las Vegas. But, as I have argued before, the East German revue continued in a different manner underneath the Las Vegas acquisitions.

In 1999, Iljinskij's Friedrichstadt-Palast revue *Elements* was the most salient agent of this acquisition of specifically 1990s Las Vegas show references and high-tech fantasy spectacle. The revue illustrated an alternative narration of the world's creation. According to *Element's* version of the creation story, humanity did not start with two people, but with many. The first tableau, 'Eros', depicted the men and women of the corps du ballet in fat suits (image 4.10). In a dream world of creation's spring, the first humans were imagined as fat creatures who nevertheless find love. Water fountains created allusions to the Garden of

Eden and an underwater ballet showcased the technological capabilities of the theatre. During the second tableau, 'Passion', love turned into a wedding. While the bride and groom were given the ability to fly by the priestess, the wedding guests formed a circular kickline (image 4.11). After the intermission, an ecstasy of dance and plenty opened the third tableau, 'Ego'. During the wedding festivities, the wedding guests went straight to hell owing to their envy of the flying ones and their selfish aspirations to get as much carnal pleasure from the wedding as possible. In the last tableau, 'Darkness', the remaining guests were falsely rescued by the ark, a space ship from the dawning new millennium, whose passengers were cold, non-loving creatures (image 4.12). In the final song, 'Can You See The Light', the remaining humans taught the intruders how to love by means of a mass choreography. The Mocker, a kind of Mephistopheles character, accompanied the audience through the show and remarked on the sense and nonsense of life.



IMAGES 4.10-12. *Elements*. 4.10. First tableau 'Eros'. **4.11.** Second tableau 'Passion'.

The relations to the Las Vegas magic shows of the 1990s are represented in an extensive use of projection technology and optical stage effects. Moreover, *Elements* proves that the Palast's allusions to the Las Vegas production show were more than just aspirational, but grounded in considerable amount of cross-referencing between Iljinskij's Friedrichstadt-Palast shows and the Las Vegas magic show. *Elements* shared its title song 'Can You See The Light' with Siegfried & Roy's show at the Mirage. German composer Frank Nimsgern wrote this song and also composed the score for *Elements*. He was also entrusted with writing the score for the follow-up tale to *Elements*, *Hexen* (2004), and the first production show under Berndt Schmidt, *Qi—A Palace Fantasy*, which was seemingly designed to extend this Vegas trajectory.



IMAGE 4.12. *Elements*. Fourth tableau 'Darkness'.

Underneath these Las Vegas aspirations, the staples of revue storytelling from the GDR were more than apparent. Ten years after the fall of the Wall, the creation story was appropriated towards, one could even argue, a socialist horizon in *Elements*. In this version, humanity started out as many of the same kind, not as two as in the biblical version. Choosing fat suits instead of flesh-flashing couture seemed to reflect Iljinskij's stance towards the capitalist revue from the strike in 1991, where he insisted on finding revue-esque solutions that mitigated what he perceived as western notions of the revue's eroticism. In the last tableau, the landing of aliens had seemed like a rescue, but turned out as a big, cold disappointment. They were initially portrayed as hostile and became helpful only after the rescuers and the rescued exchanged cultural markers, like dance. If we over-read this moment, it could allude to the political changes in 1990, during which the GDR (like the wedding party) was saved from itself by the Federal Republic (or the invading aliens) as a result of growing financial problems and inner turmoil (or uncivilised behaviour). However, the resulting dissatisfaction (the cold appearance of the aliens) was imminent and was caused by

the mass unemployment that had never been experienced during the GDR.²⁰ The relation to the Palast's GDR past are even more evident if revues from before the political changes in 1990 are considered. With *Traumvisionen* (1988), the Palast had already created a fictional uniformity that regarded the performing bodies and the stage technologies surrounding them as parts of the narrative. Eleven years and one reunification later, *Elements* took a similar approach in detaching itself from a classical revue imaginary, but still used its revue practices to convey the idea. *Elements* could be seen as a form of performance continuation, but one which sought reassurance abroad, not in its own history. In the light of the work that this thesis has done, the Palast's shift towards the Las Vegas production show can in fact be regarded as a return to what *Traumvisionen* started in 1988 (see chapter 3). Although Iljinskij claimed that only Las Vegas mattered for the Palast, what might have mattered even more is the theatre's own history and the way it treated revue through its institutional methods of performance acquisition and appropriation.

As an interim conclusion, it can be said that 'Las Vegas' at the Palast developed from a notion that was based in specific allusions to shows and themes into rather unspecified sets of circulating values shared by touring companies, like Cirque du Soleil, and pop star concerts for which Las Vegas served as a cultural anchor. The more contemporary the Palast got, the more it encountered the contemporary moment of the Las Vegas production show, which is situated in the global show. While the 1990s revues at the Palast still exposed narrative styles that can be attributed to a socialist fashioning, the contemporary Palast revue itself does not expose such direct references to its own past, but is more intricately legible. However, these references can be made visible if practices of performance appropriation are considered again. The Palast has a distinct history of cultural acquisition and appropriation that has shaped its understanding of global practices. Throughout this dissertation, I have argued that the Friedrichstadt-Palast handles its own history by means of performance in a rather subtle, if not unconscious way. The next section will return to the contemporary Palast revue and show how the Palast's view on its own history, socialism, capitalism, and theatrical spectacle can be seen together in order to account for the silenced histories.

²⁰ After reunification, 'the *Treuhandanstalt* (THA), which between 1990 and 1994 was charged with the task of privatizing the industrial and agricultural sectors of the GDR (making it the largest holding company Europe has ever seen) has been accused by many of giving away the 'GDR people's own inheritance' to the west' (Cooke, 2005:3). As a result of the making those companies profitable, growing social instability quickly led to rising dissatisfaction with the high hopes that former GDR citizens put into being able access the cultural riches of the West.

4.2. The time of the spectacle

Identifying the paradigms of the post-socialist spectacle from contemporary Friedrichstadt-Palast performance involves considering the temporal dimensions of artistic and cultural production both before and after German reunification. In the revue, reconstructions of behaviours come with specific temporalities. In this regard, it is important to talk about the 'revuelution' again, which, as discussed above, expresses a certain presentness that shields the view onto the institutional past. The Palast uses this rhetoric to claim that its current production is also the most contemporary and, as such, is the most real thing the Palast has to offer. The live moment is thus thought to be charged by the institution's presentness only: its live performances are perceived as having a single unidirectional temporality, that is, towards the supposedly new. But, as I have been arguing throughout this dissertation, the revue extravaganza is, what Rebecca Schneider with reference to historical re-enactments described as, a 'recomposition of remains *in and as the live*' (emphasis in original, 2011:98). A new live moment, which is always a reconstruction, never only concerns the present, but is, with reference to the Palast's institutional history, always also a question of performance in relation to ideology and the inflicted breaks that come when performance crosses ideologies, and thus, time. Rethinking the revue extravaganza in terms of time involves thinking about revue practice as a form of performance continuation, a way of thinking that results in a multiplicity of performance histories through which these practices come to *mean*. Performance thus materialises notions of 'prior' that trouble the perceived contemporaneity of the revue extravaganza.

So far, this thesis has discussed Friedrichstadt-Palast performance in the context of socialist world-building and this section will extend this history by construing the ramifications of socialist performance as a relation between pasts and futures, as well as between socialist and post-socialist times. In this context, I regard revue performance as theatrical strategies that help bringing forth particular tropes in very specific configurations. These tropes can signify differently in different contexts of production and reception. These tropes, however, also relate to the ephemeral archives of performance. Although the Palast fetishizes its present moment, its stage performances expose multiple temporalities that are the product of performance paradigms. In terms of temporality, these paradigms materialise aestheticisations that express what is going on underneath the Palast's modernisation that began with *Q*; they express the reverberations of repressed histories.



IMAGES 4.13. *The Wyld* promo photo. The aliens on Teufelsberg.

The Wyld (2014-2016) exposes such multiple performance histories and reconciles socialist and capitalist temporalities by means of performance. It was the fourth revue under director Berndt Schmidt, the first that ran under the label of 'Grand Show', and the one with the highest production budget thus far (Friedrichstadt-Palast, 2014c:[online]). In my analysis of the show in chapter 1, I did not see it as a part of the new era during which Schmidt sought to modernise the revue, but saw it already as part of a continuous line of revues whose concepts were concerned with reconstructing Berlin as a place of their contemporaneous time. This conceptual line started with Erik Charell's revues in the 1920s (*An Alle*, 1924), was picked up by the Marxist revues of the 1950s and 1960s (e.g. *Kinder, wie die Zeit vergeht*, 1956, and *Berliner Luft*, 1966), and found several expressions over the past 25 years, like *Berlin 7-5-0* (1987), *Kiek ma an* (1990), *Revue Berlin* (2000), *Rhythmus Berlin* (2006), and finally *The Wyld* (2016). Depending on how *The Wyld* is being contextualised—either as part of that longer trajectory or as a modern representative of the Palast's modernisation only—the ways in which the revue makes meaning changes.

In *The Wyld*, the Palast reconstructed scenes of the contemporary Berlin of 2014. Berlin was experienced as a collection of architectural and sub-cultural markers: set to an electronic music score, the show explored the life that took place underneath the secret retreat of the Lady in the Tower in the TV tower's top sphere. While she was waiting for aliens to invade the city underneath her feet, the show

explored the urban landscape and its subcultural phenomena as always already being alien, awkward and out of this world. On the level of signification, *The Wyld* exposed global tendencies, because the show reterritorialised performance codes as otherworldly.²¹ In *The Wyld*, most tableaux remained largely placeless, although they were meant to be set in Berlin. Tableaux that were not clearly marked through the TV tower set piece were without clear visual references to Berlin and only referred to Berlin institutions through other markers: the electronic music score, for example, could have resembled one of the many clubs and Nefertiti's scene could potentially have taken place in the catacombs of the Altes Museum, which holds Berlin's Egyptian collection. But at the same time, it could have taken place anywhere.

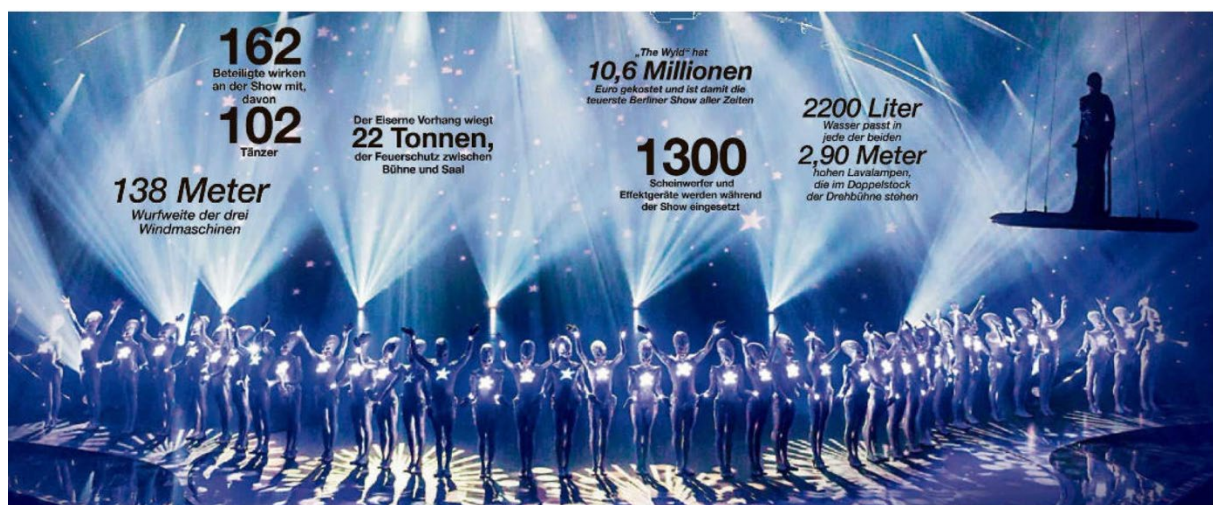


IMAGE 4.14. THE WYLD fact sheet in BZ am Sonntag. Translation: 'Three wind machines shift 138 metres of air; 162 people work on the show, 102 of whom are dancers; the safety curtain weighs 22 tons and is the fire protection between the auditorium and the stage; *The Wyld* cost €10.6m and is the most expensive Berlin show of all time; 1,300 spotlights and effect devices are used during the show; 2,200 liters of water are held inside each of the 2.90m high lava lamps of the apron stage lift'.

The aliens of *The Wyld*, however, perform as a key to construing the multiple performance histories of contemporary Friedrichstadt-Palast performance, as they came to represent a contradictory plethora of cultural signifiers. Their broad media coverage reflected the visual hegemony of revue, in which the revue is seen as a purveyor of images, rather than performance. In a promotional photo shoot for *The Wyld*, the dancers appeared in their alien costumes on top of Teufelsberg, a manmade hill made of rubble from the Second World War that covers the former Nazi military-technical college in West Berlin. Image 4.13 shows them in front of the now decommissioned U.S. listening station on Teufelsberg. While the aliens could be

²¹ Writing about Cirque du Soleil's work, Erin Hurley described the shows' global affinity as exposing otherworldly markers that make it increasingly hard to assign a specific local culture to Cirque's performance products. This, in turn, results in a greater popularity globally (Hurley, 2016:122).

read as an expression of the East German cosmic imaginary (see chapter 3) extending into the now decommissioned residues of the Cold War's political reality, a Western audience would probably miss the allusions, because they lack the knowledge, and simply read it as a typical image of Berlin decay and urban edginess, adding to the afore-mentioned otherworldliness of *The Wyld* as a global show.

The aliens of *The Wyld* could also easily have been connected to the aliens of *Elements*, but a silence about the institutional past prohibited this relation. Instead, *The Wyld* was seen as part of a fully contemporary phenomenon without any ties to the institution's past. As a result, the aliens were understood as global, by some even as Las Vegas. In its rubric 'What Berliners think and talk about', the local newspaper *Berliner Zeitung* asked in 2014, 'How much Las Vegas is the Friedrichstadt-Palast?' (Schröder, 2014:2) and compared *The Wyld*'s production value to other famous Las Vegas shows, like Siegfried & Roy's show of 1990 (which cost €40m), or Cirque du Soleil's *KÁ* (€24m). While the shows in Las Vegas ran for many years, the Palast's *The Wyld* only ran for two and cost €13m—reason enough for the newspaper to assume that this was in fact worthy of counting as Las Vegas. Aliens who invade Berlin in order to party were taken as 'essentially Wyld (read: wild [A/N]), essentially Vegas' (ibid). In the same report, a picture of the alien kickline was used to underline a list of production statistics to insinuate *The Wyld*'s galactic proportions (image 4.14). Galactic and wild is also how Jemima Rose Dean, one of the dancers who embodied the aliens on stage, understood her role. In an interview with David Jays of the British newspaper *The Guardian*, she described the aliens' costumes like this: 'The most bonkers costumes are for the Alien Ball in the finale. We have full bodysuits encrusted with rhinestones and Swarovski crystals, with LED lights on our chests and wrists, and huge masks. Oh, and sparkly silver high heels' (in Jays, 2015, n.p.) (image 4.14). While words like 'ball', 'rhinestones', 'Swarovski crystals', 'LED lights', and 'silver high heels' are of the revue extravaganza, attributions like 'bonkers' and the description of the placement of the LED nodes go beyond the usual revue imaginary. On the global scale of consumer culture, the aliens have also been embedded in the brand history of the show's director and fashion designer Thierry Manfred Mugler, who has created a fragrance that goes by the same name. The fragrance also shares its attributive subtitle with *The Wyld*: 'Out of the

world' (Mugler, n.d.). The aliens could thus be understood as a staged expression of his brand and relate the show to a very 1920s understanding of the revue as a purveyor of consumer culture.²²

4.2.1. Performing multiple temporalities

If Friedrichstadt-Palast performance is understood as a series of related performances that is not interrupted by distinct historical breaks, then the landing of the aliens can no longer be regarded as a mere signification of the institution's global aspiration. In terms of performance, the aliens perform an important gesture towards the revue's post-socialist identity as they are, within the narrative of the show, the characters that organize thoughts and behaviours according to a socialist paradigm of prospective storytelling and the associated dramaturgical patterns that I have described in chapter 1. As such, they embody different notions of time and alter the revue's capitalist temporality into one that exhibits post-socialist tendencies. The reason these are not immediately visible is because they are obstructed by the Palast's global, that is, chrononormative manifestations. When in the early 1990s, the formation of the Enquete Commission for the Reappraisal of the History and Consequences of the SED Dictatorship²³ was an early attempt to create a legitimised guideline for reappraising East Germany that, at the same time, created a specific post-reunification chrononormativity; away from the East German dictatorship towards a reunified Germany under western narration. Queer theorist Elizabeth Freeman uses the term 'chrononormativity' to describe 'a socially meaningful embodiment through temporal regulation' (2010:3) that results in a particular form of binding, or kinship. According to Judith Halberstam, chrononormativity requires 'notions of the normal on which it depends' (2005:4) and thus shapes the logics of a 'reproductive temporality' (ibid) so that these notions appear natural and preordained. In the case of the Palast, these 'notions of the normal' were imparted by capitalist time, the western narration of East German accession to the Federal Republic, and the Palast's turn towards what it perceived as the global show. Through both the Marxist and post-reunification appropriations of time, a contemporary Palast revue exposes traces of changing chrononormativities. In other words, culturally favoured expressions and ways of being have changed from a teleological Marxist

²² For the relation between the revue, production shows, and consumer culture, see Schweitzer, 2011.

²³ See Introduction for more info on Enquete Commission and its ramifications for the reappraisal of East German culture.

perspective during the GDR to the development of a capitalistically oriented market economy over the past 25 years. The aliens, if considered beyond the confines of the revolution's chrononormativity, render an articulation of these times that expose the post-socialist paradigms of contemporary Palast performance.

In order to discuss these temporal layers of the Friedrichstadt-Palast spectacle, I will employ French post-Marxist and Situationist Guy Debord's theory of what he called *The Society of the Spectacle* (published in 1967) and will, for a moment, revisit the Palast's GDR work, before I apply the findings to contemporary shows. Debord named his manifesto after the French word for 'theatre', *spectacle*. Both, theatres and manifestos, strive to make things visible. *Manifesto* means 'bring to the open'; *theatre* means 'a place of seeing'. In Debord's theory, the intersection between bringing to the open and a place of seeing is society, which contains its image-creating institutions that are usually organized hegemonically. Considering the East German revue as a kind of spectacle that happened at the same time as Debord wrote his theory, but that he himself did not see, his theory helps to destabilize dominant notions of time, whether this time is socialist or capitalist. In Debord's terms, the revue as a social phenomenon help us see those different temporalities at work.

According to Debord, spectacle is tautological, which 'stems from the fact that its means and ends are identical' (1967:10). This leads to the 'passive acceptance' (ibid) of capitalist modes of production and exploitation in capitalist societies. Spectacles are self-perpetuating images of cultural production that veil both the actual production processes and the resulting modes of capitalist exploitation. In this regard, the East German revue could be regarded as anti-spectacle in the Debordian sense as it took issue with the exploitation of capitalist modes of production and historiography and placed the spectacle itself outside of this circular logic. Whereas the 1960s in the Western democratic societies were a period of revolutionary and utopian energy (anti-war demonstrations in the U.S., the sexual revolution, and student riots in France meant a resurgence of Marxist and liberal ideas in both academia and the political sphere), the East German government was still trying to find ways out of the post-war recession by implementing socialism as its only legitimate future. In the socialist state, utopian energy was exercised as part of the state ideology. Beginning in the late 1940s, the utopian cultural policies positioned the socialist state on a trajectory that led away from state capitalism towards communism. This ideological thinking of already being in a revolution to overcome capitalism distinguishes the GDR's spectacles from those in the capitalist society. In the eyes of the

socialists, the capitalist societies were experiencing history as yet to happen and, as Debord confirms, as being caught up in their repeating spectacles.

While Debord was only thinking about capitalist temporality, the socialists beyond the Iron Curtain created ideological spectacles that operated in a different temporality. Revues like *Kinder, wie die Zeit vergeht* (1959), or *Berliner Luft* (1966, see chapter 1), historicised the city and its cultural production and put the spectacles of bourgeois and socialist Berlin on a trajectory of societal progress. They explained that socialism allegedly helped society advance on a trajectory towards the liberation from the feudal structures that are inherent to capitalist cultural production. As I have investigated in the past chapters, the socialist claims were quite high. Two years after Guy Debord wrote the *Society of the Spectacle* in France, the Friedrichstadt-Palast outlined in their Socialist Development Report on 1968 how its own spectacle would in fact add to overcoming capitalist manipulation: 'In 1968, we successfully vanquished phenomena of the past' (Martens, 1969:5)²⁴ by having 'continuously shaped the socialist conception of man...in the ideational unity of socialist culture and art that required the total commitment of our creative capabilities in our fight of the ongoing battle against complacency and mediocrity' (ibid:4)²⁵. *Minirock & Riesenwelle* (1968, discussed in the introduction) related socialist modes of production with the Palast's cultural output and thereby proposed one way of overcoming capitalist manipulation. Another example was *Berliner Luft* (1966): through the dialectics of the images purveyed through the entertainment arts, the Palast revue was a theatrical intervention into representations of reality. Culture prefigured socialist reality and illustrated how socialism became real. When people left the theatre after *Berliner Luft*, they saw the building site of the TV tower in the distance. But minutes before, they had seen on the stage how the completion of this landmark building would affect socialist society and its development. The teleology of socialist time imparted confidence in the system and the representation of Alexanderplatz as done and dusted during the revue's finale inserted another reality that was based on the socialist utopia of progression.

²⁴ 'Hier ist es, besonders im Jahre 1968, gelungen, Erscheinungen der Vergangenheit zu überwinden.'

²⁵ 'Fast in allen Produktionen des Jahres 1968 war der Friedrichstadt-Palast bestrebt, seinen Beitrag zur Formung des sozialistischen Menschenbildes und zur Formung sozialistischer Persönlichkeiten zu leisten. Besonders das Ringen um die ideelle Einheit sozialistischer Kultur und Kunst verlangt den vollen Einsatz aller schöpferischer Fähigkeiten, und den ständigen Kampf gegen Selbstzufriedenheit und Mittelmaß zu führen.'

This dramaturgical structure was an expression of socialist realism. The final tableaux always functioned as a confirmation of the social relationships rehearsed during the show. Marxist dramaturgy was a practice that linked inherited histories and cultural practices with a teleological production of futures. A revue's finale portrayed the outcome of socialist life as part of an imagined near-future. This dramaturgical pattern reflected a political stance of socialist realism, which, based on Manfred Jäger's analysis of socialist cultural production, I termed 'prospective consciousness' in chapter 1. History was reflected upon in relation to the ideological logic that its re-narration created. During the East German development of the Palast revue, prospective consciousness was established as a principle of Marxist cultural practices and was part of the aesthetic doctrine that helped to legitimise the socialist system. But more than that, it evolved as an artistic response to Marx's theories, which prioritised class struggle. In *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* Marx writes that it is in the 'ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out' (Marx, 1904:12). Prospective consciousness was such an ideological form and its ideological end was essentially to defeat capitalist vestiges of the bourgeois revue.

The socialist spectacle ideologically historicized its own existence and therefore did something that the capitalist spectacle according to Debord did not do.²⁶ It seemingly escaped cyclical time and put itself onto a progressive trajectory—until it was caught up in its own cycles of slackening progress and continued class war during the 1980s. Whereas Debord saw himself situated in a pre-revolutionary world with history yet to happen, East German cultural producers found themselves ideologically on that revolutionary trajectory already. Whereas Marxists see capitalist time as cyclical, the socialists during the 1960s used art in order to materialize the teleology of their new, socialist reality. This perception is, however, only valid for a time when socialist ideology of the communist utopia worked as world-building. When it started to falter by the late 1970s, such strategies came to serve a greater, superior idea, whose dramaturgical manifestation was prospective. In *Kinder, wie die Zeit vergeht* (1959, see chapter 1) a journey through Berlin's bourgeois revue

²⁶ Although the socialist revue reconfigured cultural production based on socialist temporality of progression towards communism, it nevertheless inserted another kind of spectacle: the spectacle of state socialism. Debord's post-Marxist critique was remarkably different from the established Left of Stalinist character beyond the Berlin Wall and in the Eastern Bloc countries. Debord positioned himself as anti-Stalinist and against all repressive regimes. According to Debord, what he termed spectacle could also be facilitated in the name of communism. In fact, and similar to capitalism, state socialism 'present(s) itself to the world as the only proletarian solution' (Debord, 1967:55) and the only possible future. In paragraph 102 of *The Society of the Spectacle*, he critiqued the police state methods that were employed to transform peoples' perceptions of the world in the East based on Stalinism.

and entertainment past ended in a tableau that was set four years into the socialist future and exhibited the most lavish stage design and most uniform dancers of the whole show. The finale could thus be read as the Palast's commitment to the genre, but also as an affirmation that the socialist revolution would acquire known objects of culture and appropriate them to fit the agenda of a future of socialist plenty. Both, Debord and the Friedrichstadt-Palast had a desire to find simple ideas that could be displayed. Both conceived of art as a political and cultural statement on the bourgeois nature of society. Both used methods of agitation: one, to criticize the capitalist spectacle in a manner that had been taken to imply that spectacle and capitalism were inextricable, the other to criticize the capitalist spectacle by means of creating spectacular, yet socialist entertainment. The Friedrichstadt-Palast used the means of the revue extravaganza in order to materialise the temporalities that its ideology created. Thinking within the socialist temporality of the spectacle, it developed dramaturgical patterns that it used to critique capitalist historiography.

4.2.2. The aliens and the dramaturgical paradigms of prospective consciousness

In this historical context, *The Wylde's* prospective storytelling emerges as an extension of the socialist spectacle and thus as a preordained dramaturgical pattern of Palast performance. Whereas the premises of *Berliner Luft* or *Kinder, wie die Zeit vergeht* were rooted in actual state politics, the premise of *The Wylde* was fictional, but the aliens still expressed the very material consequences of a similar dramaturgical thinking. During *The Wylde's* last tableau, which took place in an imagined near-future, aliens land on the stage of the Palast on silvery LED-lit surf boards and celebrate diversity and weirdness together with the urban freaks of Berlin. This moment, in fact, unconsciously connects *The Wylde* with its predecessors of the Berlin revue trajectory and the premises of prospective consciousness. *The Wylde* proved that prospective consciousness works across ideologies as a revue-dramaturgical pattern. In Marxist normative time, this dramaturgical pattern appeared as a principle of revue performance that was openly shaped through discourse and practice. In post-Marxist capitalist chrononormativity, it became paradigmatic and therefore invisible. The aliens of *The Wylde*, however, personified the formerly ideological form and, through their performative incorporation into the show, reconciled the socialist and capitalist/global temporalities of the contemporary revue. Structures of ideology were supplanted by structures of fiction. The contemporary revue is thus a post-socialist revue that exposes multiple temporalities: a Marxist vestigial temporality and dominant capitalist

temporalities. In chapter 2, I have described the surrogacy of embodied practices. In a similar way, the re-enactment of this dramaturgical pattern forms a continuity with its past enactments and thus connects past to present.



IMAGE 4.15. *The Wyld: Out of this world*. The finale tableau 'Alien Ball'. Nefertiti as the alien queen and her entourage in garments designed by Manfred Thierry Mugler. The backdrop projection signified that the place of the scene is indeed the rooftop of the Palast theatre.

The narrative perspective of *The Wyld* was geared towards the conclusion of the finale, without it being a causal narration of events. Rather, the revue's tableaux only loosely related to the finale, but the finale was key to impart sense to the tableaux. Through the programme booklet we learned that the girl in the TV tower lived there because she was waiting for the aliens to invade the city. Nefertiti's entourage in the revue's second act awoke to the sound of techno in the catacombs of the Neues Museum, because the aliens were about to arrive. In a vernacular context and read in terms of temporality, techno music in Berlin expressed 'a new brand of futurism' (Lessour, 2012:7) after reunification. It became the music of a city 'no longer under control' (ibid:304) in which the leftist squatters of the city's west moved east and brought techno into the empty barracks, factories, and bunkers.²⁷ Pairing the appearance of aliens with techno music

²⁷ On the history of techno around and after German reunification see Lessour, 2012:304-365.

is thus not only an expression of an abstract kind of futurity, in *The Wylld*, it actually accompanied, one might argue, a second coming of curious invaders and thus created a multiplicity of temporalities that linked the city's history with the dramaturgical progression of the show. Just before the aliens landed on the stage, the TV tower's top sphere and the video-projected bird's eye view of Berlin by night on the cyclorama turned up-side-down and in a coup de théâtre, the girl in the tower fell to the stage floor, creating the illusion that she was sucked into outer space by the aliens (now, as Berlin stood on its head). Just after they had landed and finished their kickline (image 4.15), they were joined by Nefertiti's party and Nefertiti emerged as their queen.

The important difference between the contemporary and the socialist forms of prospective consciousness is that, in *The Wylld*, it purposefully only works forwards, into the future, while any traces of local history that relate to the more recent GDR or post-reunification history have once again been erased. While *Berliner Luft* (1966) historized the city's development towards socialism and during the revue's finale projected the socialist utopia into the future, *The Wylld* started in the present and referenced several sites of the city as rooted in contemporary culture. For example, Nefertiti's party in the second act was conjured up when the former Egyptian queen's bust in the Altes Museum Berlin awakened at night and turned the catacombs into an underground techno party. In *The Wylld*, the narrative premise of a futurity to which the representations of Berlin's urban culture led were framed by The Lady in the Tower and her place of retreat from the beginning of the show. The landing of the aliens was the key to understanding this perspective.

4.2.3. *Show:Me's* techno-futurist performance paradigms

Unlike *The Wylld*, its predecessor *Show:Me* explicitly employed history in a manner that reconstructed revue practice on the basis of socialist performance paradigms, but used the Las Vegas aspirations to divert attention from this practice by leaving the institution's socialist history once again unacknowledged. With *Show:Me*, the Palast asked what a revue would look like nowadays if notorious revue directors and performers from the past, like Busby Berkeley, Florence Ziegfeld, or Esther Williams, had directed it. 'What would such a "super-show" look like?' (Friedrichstadt-Palast, 2012:[online]), the Palast asked in its show announcement. The modern interpretation of classical revue vocabulary resulted in press claims like 'Move over, Las Vegas!' (image 4.05), but once again did not acknowledge whose performance practices mattered more—Ziegfeld's

or the socialist paradigms of the Palast's revue practice? The latter, however, infused a second temporality that operated underneath the allusion to western revue history and in fact structured the events that took place on stage.

Show:Me and *The Wyld* share the same chrononormativity in which post-reunification and the 'revuelution' have created two distinct breaks that seemingly construct an ideological distance from the socialist past. This first temporality involves the linear narration of past, present, and future that expresses the teleological story towards a reunified Germany. The other, unacknowledged temporality involves a recycling of socialist paradigms in the post-socialist revue that structure the ever-widening distance between the politically defeated past and its aesthetically redefined future. If the past is unmuted, *Show:Me* emerges as part of a trajectory of Palast revues like *R nie Revue* (1972, see chapter 1), which historicised its genre's stage practices, and revues like *Premiere: Friedrichstraße 107* (1984, see chapter 3), which staged its technological means on the basis of a techno-futurist thinking.

Like prospective consciousness, I perceive 'techno-futurism' as a principle of Marxist cultural appropriation that has become a paradigm of the post-socialist revue. I have used the term to describe the principles of a directorial thinking that acquires moments of the classic revue and appropriates them by means of new stage technologies and stage processes (see chapter 3). In contrast to prospective consciousness, a paradigmatic gesture to technological excellence in post-socialist revues can also be found in the Las Vegas production show. Las Vegas shows, both those of the 1980s and today's global entertainments, place great value on a broad understanding of seamlessness and a simultaneous celebration of scale and décor. In the Friedrichstadt-Palast, however, the striving for technological excellence has its own history that was embedded in Marxist structures of thinking. The Palast's contemporary focus on technological excellence can therefore be understood as a confluence of both a socialist showcasing of how technology is pioneering and how the theatre-makers are capable of structuring novel stage moments, and a global production aesthetic of the expensive and seamless spectacle. Confluence is defined as a 'flowing with' or a coming together of different aspects, which remain visible to a certain degree. What has been framed by the Palast as the seamless Las Vegas aesthetics of technological excellence in *Show: Me* can much better be described if the performance's techno-futurist methods are recognised and understood as a production paradigm of techno-futurism.

Over the show's two acts, the theatre showcased its capability to consciously structure processes with the help of its stage technology. Image 4.18, staged for PR purposes, shows how the theatre's stage was modified for the purpose of this production.²⁸ The stage was covered by a stage deck that comprised of three elevated sections. The scale of the stage was enhanced by providing a sensation of both depth and height, which transformed the spatial possibilities of the performed choreographies. LED-lit stairs connected the different levels and added colourful visual markers. The auditorium on the right-hand side of the image was framed by an LED ribbon that emanated from the apron. In the moment of the image, the apron lift was converted into the pool, into which crashed a waterfall from 15m height. In the show, the flowing water was lit by laser lights as if hundreds of thousands of diamonds were falling onto the stage. The theatre's technological capabilities created the frame for a performance vocabulary like Esther Williams's bathing beauties from the landmark film production *Million Dollar Mermaid* (1952; Mervyn LeRoy, dir.) to be acquired and appropriated for a modern audience. An invisible lift inside the pool allowed the water depth to be adjusted for splashing choreographies in ankle-deep water or synchronized swimming choreographies, evoking Williams's performance legacy. The smell of chlorine during those scenes was always present, adding to the immediacy of this updating of revue history. Further up the stage, the three singers were seen standing in front of the erected 'rose', that is, a dial onto which were mounted five showgirls who revolved vertically together with this disk: an homage to Busby Berkeley's metamorphoses and signature overhead shots. In his movies, Berkeley's intention was to liberate dance from the conventions of the stage. Instead of tilting the camera angle and filming from above, the directors of *Show:Me* used the Palast's stage technologies and tilted a section of the stage including the bodies on it to achieve a similar bird's eye perspective for the spectators in the auditorium.²⁹ Like in Berkeley's movies, the choreographies were structured around scenographies, hydraulically operated platforms, and other shiny stage areas. The area above the stage reveals dozens of LED panels, the glittery revue curtain, and the orchestra podium at the very back of the stage, displayed on the left-hand side of the image.

²⁸ What is shown together in this tableau vivant (for PR purposes) had never appeared together in the show.

²⁹ Berkeley was infamous for his play with camera to convey his interpretation of revue vocabulary. Berkeley 'never worked in the revue form per se' (Rubin, 1993:33), but cultivated his interpretation of revue vocabulary through the medium of film. For Berkeley's aesthetic across theatre and film, see Rubin, 1993.

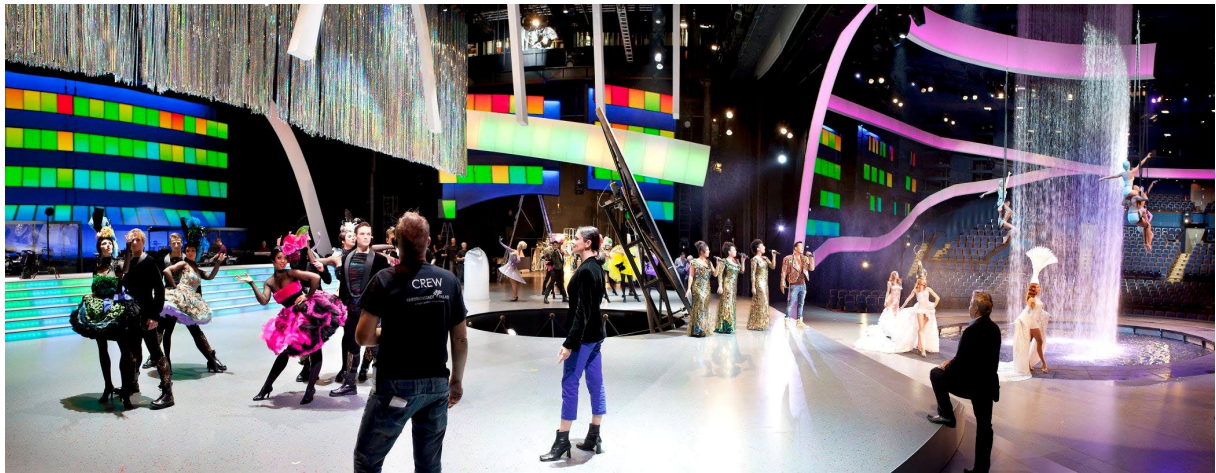


IMAGE 4.16. *SHOW:ME*. The techno-futurism of the modern revue stage.

This image stages the Palast's techno-futurist self-perception. It shows the stage fully lit up and thereby reveals the show's key stage-technological fixtures as such, but also shows the people who remote-controlled it during the show and who were responsible for its proper functioning. They had never before appeared together in this constellation, neither during the show nor in a rehearsal, as a rehearsal would not have allowed the simultaneous use of all areas of the stage for safety reasons. For example, the man in the front with the black t-shirt is Olaf Eichler, the theatre's head of lighting. To his right in blue trousers is Alexandra Georgieva, director of the theatre's corps du ballet. Every night, more than 60 people ensure the smooth running of the stage technologies and processes, such as the flying of performers and the transitions of tableaux (Friedrichstadt-Palast, 2014b:[online]). The focus on labouring people and the presentation of the technologies they master as processual and progressive distinguishes the Palast from the Las Vegas spectacle. This image, like *Show:Me* itself, is thus rather an echo of socialist performance paradigms than it is in line with Las Vegas revue traditions.

The revue's main enquiry—what would happen if Ziegfeld et al. made a show nowadays—reveals an understanding of technology that is about more than just a mastery of processes and machines to achieve seamlessness, as would be expected from a show in Las Vegas. Read in the terms of techno-futurism, the announcement could be framed as the Palast striving to 'translate the formal principles [of the historic icons, A/N] into the here and now' (Friedrichstadt-Palast, 2012:[online]). However, the direction of this translation is relevant: the revue was not about how the original revue vocabulary could be updated to meet today's technological potential, but how the Palast's technological capabilities from today could be put to use to conceive of a show that would be true to the Ziegfeldian revue imaginary. The version of Las Vegas that

appears on the stage of the Friedrichstadt-Palast was a post-socialist appropriation of a western revue imaginary. In this regard, techno-futurism has become a paradigm for using modern stage technologies to redo the classical revue's performance vocabulary. In the GDR, this transfer would have been geared towards the perceived technological advancement of the socialist society. This time, the desire to acquire pieces of a distinctly American revue culture became a catalyst for displaying the institution's advancement and it being modern beyond the ideological confines of socialism. In other words, it was a post-socialist paradigm that structured the relentless re-invention of Palast performance.



IMAGES 4.17-18. *SHOW:ME* conjures up techno-futurist relations. 4.17. Overture: Revival of the past. **4.18.** First tableau: 'Show Me: We are here, we are now'.

At the beginning of *Show:Me*, the curtain cutting off the apron from the main stage showed a projection in bird's eye perspective of a man, played by Oscar Loya, who dived into a lake. After he had disappeared in the virtual waters, the projection dimmed and he appeared behind the projection gauze, this time in reality, suspended from behind the 11m-high proscenium arch. It appeared as if he came diving down from above: down there, the stage floor became the bottom of the lake and in the wet sands of time, he witnessed the black-and-white beauties of revue history standing on a glittery staircase (image 4.16). He walked towards them, touched them, the electronic beat started, the stage became all colourful and exposed its LED light strips and video panels, and the show reinserted what had just seemed historic revue vocabulary into a contemporary revue-technological landscape (image 4.17).

The show's overall aesthetic was a re-interpretation of the revue's glamour. Judith Brown has defined glamour as 'clean (synthetic, cold, abstract)' (Brown, 2009:1). In *Show:Me*, this perception of glamour as abstract and synthetic received a materialistic treatment and is best visible in the stage's scenography. The stage was framed by LED panels that were covered with light diffuser film, creating large unicolour surfaces that were capable for quick, automated colour changes. The main stage contained three pairs of floating

arches that could change positions on all axes (stage design by Joe Atkins and John Stillwell). During the GDR, the revue had been understood as a synthetic genre (see chapter 1), by which the Palast's dramaturge Wolfgang Tilgner referred to the Palast revue's artificial composition of stage effects and bodies. The plastic surfaces of *Show:ME*'s stage correspond to this understanding of the revue as synthetic and episodic. This notion of the abstract and glossy also extends into couture. In the revue's opener after the interval, the Ziegfeldian aesthetics of striding beauties was staged in a context of plastics. Image 4.19 shows how the dancers' costumes quoted showgirl aesthetics, but also related to what Stephen Gundle and Clino T. Castelli in their work about glamour as a cultural system described as the 'peek-a-boo effects of semi-nudity' (2006:180) that plastic couture allows. The aesthetic unity of stage and costume convey the revue in a dialectical manner: while plastics and glossy surfaces impart a contemporary whiff, the history that is actually portrayed reveals itself through the spatial configuration and the roles performed by the women. In the back of the stage, the human harps of *Fashions of 1934* (1934, dir. William Dieterle, choreogr. Busby Berkeley) were interpreted as figures made of gold. Framed by the artificial and abstract stage environment, the traditional revue aesthetics were acquired and appropriated, and reinterpreted as a distinct Palast modernity.



IMAGE 4.19. *SHOW:ME*. Opening of the second act after the intermission: 'The Song of Beauties'.

In a post-socialist Germany, the application of techno-futurist strategies and appropriation of a global show culture resulted in multiple temporalities that work upon the revue's narrative premise. Non-capitalist time (that is, the continued existence of socialist performance paradigms) and capitalist time (that is, the ever-growing aspirations for 'Las Vegas') coalesced in a fictional world of plastic glamour and the exhibition of modern stage technology. In the revue's opening, the chorus's first line, 'we are here, we are now', already imparted the idea of this show: show me how revue history can be re-done today. While the revue fused a western revue history under the pretence of working in a western imaginary, it still used vernacular, and I argue, socialist, performance paradigms to materialise this idea. The result was a post-socialist journey into a modern appropriation of western revue history. In line of what I have been arguing throughout this chapter, the performance of Marxist cultural appropriation has become a paradigm of the contemporary Palast performance and structures the institution's thinking underneath its Las Vegas phantasies.

4.2.4. Beyond iconography: The suppressed performance pasts

The problem with both *The Wyld* and *Show:Me* (and any other show since *Qi*) is that the post-socialist performance paradigms remained unacknowledged, but were still understood as institutional and unshakeable. A history of breaks and the resulting lack of a comprehensive reappraisal of East German culture that would have accounted for culture as much as politics have caused several aspects of the Palast's revue performance to go unnoticed underneath a modern realignment of the revue's tropes. I started this chapter with an anecdote of my encounter with the former presidents of the United States and Russia, because the manner in which I met them (one after the other representing their ideology and political temporality as separate) and the questions they asked me (one talked about money, the other reminisced about an abstract aesthetic value) epitomised how I came to understand the modern Friedrichstadt-Palast's relation to its own past during my work as a production assistant and assistant director. Socialist and post-socialist ideologies have imparted different temporalities of show making that, at first sight, seem incompatible, but in the end, work upon one another.



IMAGES 4.20. The foyer. The Friedrichstraße entrance is on the lower level to the right. The doors to the auditorium are on the first floor to the left. The chandelier in the middle was restored to its original form in 2011.

Neither historians nor practitioners have started to understand revue performance as an archive in its own right, despite the fact that the institution's GDR history is palpable in every corner of the building: in the foyer (image 4.20), there are framed photos of the old and the new Palast, photos of stars who performed on its stage (like Liza Minnelli, Josephine Baker, or Louis Armstrong), and stage photographs from GDR shows. In the canteen, which is accessible only for members of the cast and crew, the wallpapers are large-scale prints of the interiors of the old Friedrichstadt-Palast. The foyer and the cast-in-concrete exteriors still impart a whiff of East German culture. In fact, director Berndt Schmidt decreed that the theatre's remnants from the GDR may not be removed anymore, referring to the theatre building as an icon of its time (Kirschner, 2007:[online]). In 2011, under Schmidt, the chandelier in the foyer's centre was even restored to its original 1983 design. But once the lights turn off on its stage, the Palast tries hard to impart a notion of Las Vegas performance that conceals all these references to its own past and creates a unique mix of global cultural references. The reason this works is because the references to its own history only exist in the form of still images, which have ceased to be reproduced in performance. The paradigms that still endure and that this thesis has described over the past four chapters cannot be found in the Palast's

public ancestral hall, that is, in the photos exhibited in its foyer. They only become apparent if performance is read as that which happens live, which is processual and based in structures of thought and behaviours.

As a practitioner working with the described tensions, I have always wondered why the approaches taken by dramaturgs, directors, and the in-house choreographers were considered only in relation to the Las Vegas allusions. In all my conversations with colleagues, no one understood the landing of the aliens in *The Wylld* as even remotely paradigmatic of socialist performance. *Show:Me* was understood as unique and its methods were not thought of as socialist paradigms of the techno-futurist and historicising performance methods of an old ideology. In my role as a historian, I had just discovered documents about the fashioning of revue performance during the GDR at the same time and had developed an understanding that *The Wylld*, which had just premiered at this point, actually was not the unique new show that the Palast tried to market it as. Oddly, *The Wylld* seemed to have become part of the institutional archive. Having had one leg in the archive, the other in the auditorium during the show's rehearsals, I began to see several temporalities at work. While the succession from Gorbachev to Bush to Merkel represented the dominant temporality of a distinct and linear succession of past, present, and future, my work in the archive increasingly altered this perception towards a model of performance as recycling forms of action that work independently of their ideological contexts. The paradigms remained in force, without, as it seemed, anybody being actually aware what they were exactly and how they shaped Palast performance until today. Aliens, modern Busby Berkeleys, and the fictions of contemporary Berlin had caused the revue to be caught up in a presentness that did not realise how its dominant and underlying temporalities worked upon what had been taken to be understood as the contemporary Berlin revue.

Before this dissertation concludes, there is one final thought that is necessary to add another, yet important detail to the recovery the theatre's East German past. I started this PhD, on the one hand, because I wondered what these temporalities were. On the other hand, I wanted to find strategies for how this lack of consciousness can be addressed in the future. When the East German utopias stopped working, their performance paradigms kept being effective, but were not actively addressed. So, what could the utopias for future Palast performance be?

4.3. Coda: Beyond reconstruction

When we discover such paradigms in contemporary Palast shows, these relations to the past should not be understood as allusive or citational, but rather as stage practices that compose and organise aesthetics that are effective even beyond their ideological confines. Jakovljevic argues that the formation of such paradigms even 'spells out the end of ideology' (2016:25), because they evidence a value-neutral design of embodied behaviour. What was at stake during the political changes in 1990 was not the performance paradigms as such, but the historical discourse of reappraising the East German past. The Palast's silence about its own history in fact prolonged the existence of aesthetic relations and, because they were de-ideologised as a result of pursuing the Las Vegas dream, have turned into paradigms of performance. The emphasis on the political change still engenders a very loud silence, underneath which the continued paradigms of embodied behaviour largely remain unaddressed; but remain to be archived as performance. As a result, I have argued that the Palast exploits rather than uses its own performance practices, which results in the reconstruction of paradigms as strips of behaviour. In this section, I argue for a recreation or reinvention of those paradigms towards a conscious examination of current practices that still embrace the historical dimensions of the aesthetic relations of contemporary Palast performance. In other words, if we start to recognise the post-socialist performance paradigms underneath the Palast's global ambitions, how can we look at both—the East German performance vestiges in alliance with the global references—together again?

Such a proposition involves considering how utopias at the Palast were and are fashioned, as they provide the horizons towards which performance-making is geared. As I have mentioned, the current Palast revue is an accumulation of multiple temporalities and the post-socialist revue is a product of competing ideas of time. Therefore, the concepts to destabilise these temporalities need to be framed as utopias of multiplicity. I want to use ideas of queer world building to account for both histories and futures. Thinking queer about the post-socialist revue means, first, being knowledgeable about its past in order to, second, understand how these textures and gestures press onto the present through its performance paradigms. This understanding enables revue makers to, third, constructively work with the strangeness that occurs when the global spectacle is reterritorialized at the Palast; in other words, to provocatively press back onto its own history. The Palast is thus not merely a revue theatre, but an arts institution of unique historical

continuity. As such, it should challenge the entrenchments of performance paradigms and reconfigure its institutional historical relations in a post-reunification Germany of the 21st century.

Despite these theoretical enquiries, there are certain parallels that can be drawn between queer theories of time and Marxism. Queer theorists and Marxists share similar approaches towards destabilising the established chrononormativity, which result from the discursive relation of Marxist future-making with ideals of queer world-building. Queer scholar José Esteban Muñoz wrote that 'we are not quite queer yet, that queerness, what we will really know as queerness, does not yet exist' (2009:22). Since he derived his perception of queer utopia from East German Marxist Ernst Bloch, we can assume some parallels between East German and queer futurity. If we were to exchange 'queerness' for 'communism' in Muñoz's quote, we would get very close to the former East German dominant understanding of time within which communism had been imagined as not-quite-there-yet.

At the same time as such parallels can be drawn, there are a number of potential objections to be addressed, because comparing East German everyday life to queer ways of living is extraordinarily problematic. First, it is admittedly hard to think about the GDR as queer, because at least ideologically, there seems to be a very teleological view of the future that was being aimed for. Muñoz describes the queer as essentially being about plural utopias that emerge from a re-assessment of the past; it is about 'a world not quite here, a horizon of possibility, not a fixed schema' (2009:97). Marxist futurity was precisely the opposite: a fixed schema. From a historical perspective, this causes the GDR as a society to be seen as very un-queer. Second, and seen from a post-reunification perspective, the former GDR emanates as the ostracized other Germany. Paul Cooke argued that East Germany may also be seen as the 'West's "Orient"', because the East's stereotypical representations mainly propped up feelings of Western superiority and further propels the argument about East Germany's cultural illegitimacy.³⁰ Nevertheless, East German culture may be regarded as a different kind of contemporary Germanness. In this reading, the Palast emerges postreunification as an extension not of socialism—because the surrounding ideology has shifted—but exposes patterns of cultural production that can share similar artistic processes with queer ways of thinking about time and theatrical production methods.

³⁰ Cooke derived this thinking from postcolonial studies and Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978). For the East as West Germany's orient, see Cooke, 2005:11-14.

Currently, as I outlined above, the past haunts the present, because of our repressed and therefore uncertain knowledge of it. If a queer thinking about time was to be used to re-examine post-socialist paradigms of revue performance, then the reinvention of revue vocabulary needs to be framed as an active appropriation of the formerly appropriated. Writing about reconstructions in dance, Mark Franko observes that a reconstruction 'recreate[s] a reality without a predetermined effect' (1989:58). By contrast, a reinvention 'aims at creating precisely that effect' (ibid), which, in relation to the Palast, involves knowing what exactly becomes reconstructed in its daily practice. This intervention engenders an active doing that emanates from a scrutiny of the silenced histories of East German revue performance. This also involves a stepping beyond the scripted logics of the contemporary chrononormative pragmatism of a prolonging of early versions of East German reappraisal. The queer approach towards a creative involvement with post-socialist performance paradigms will destabilise post-reunification time in as far as it embraces the important temporal unity that connects post-socialist paradigms to formerly socialist principles. I propose, therefore, a reinvention that encompasses a scrutiny of the temporal relation of a kind that related *The Wyld's* prospective consciousness to other forms of the same narrative structure in the past. A complete queer intervention, however, would have had the aliens land not in the future, but maybe in an alternative version of the Palast's past, for example. It is thus an active involvement with these paradigms by acknowledging how they had been shaped in the past, how they press against the institution's presentness, and then, provocatively, working with them to imagine new, or at least alternative, temporalities.

The Palast's Las Vegas allusion is the theatre's current utopian horizon. It mobilises its creative doing and acts as an ideal for the shows to come. This is, however, a very teleological approach towards futures. It can be expected that the production costs for future shows will be increased even more—which might in fact also be an exhibition of the theatre's enduring techno-futurist striving. In trying to compete with the Las Vegas production shows, the share of circus performance to be brought into the theatre will probably compensate for the currently decreasing share of dance delivered by the in-house corps du ballet. This striving expresses, however, a presentness that is based in the theatre's lack of actively reappraising its history. But, according to Muñoz, '[u]topian performativity is often fuelled by the past' (2009:106). If the Las Vegas production show is meant to remain a factor of the theatre's futurity, then the narratives of the

past, the narratives that have shaped socialist performance and its post-socialist paradigms, need to be construed as functions of a vital futurity.

The increasing share of circus performance, for example, has been a steady development since 2008.³¹ Changing the share of both circus performance and dance has, however, its own tradition in the Palast's performance history, as I outlined in chapter 2 in my discussion about the Palast's development from a variety to a revue theatre. This development led to the rebuilding of the Palast as a theatre for dance presentations in the 1980s, as I described in chapter 3. Reversing this ratio of practices towards a greater share of circus performance creates another important temporal unity with these past developments that would need to be addressed in both the revue's dramaturgical structures, the staging of bodies, and the training of dancers and performers. Although this development moves the Palast revue closer to the global show, the directorial challenges in mastering this move need to involve an active scrutiny of stage practices, use of space, reception techniques, and techniques of framing. Otherwise, the unacknowledged past will create further paradigms underneath the Las Vegas aspirations that might obstruct the Palast's potentiality for a post-reunification utopia. The development of the genre 'Friedrichstadt-Palast revue' is thus a negotiation of how we want to look back at what happened during the roughly 45 years of the revue's socialist appropriation and the 25 years of post-socialist refashioning.

³¹ In an unprecedented manner since the 'revuelution' began in 2008, *THE ONE Grand Show* (premiered in October 2016) used circus performers and circus acts to convey its idea. At the same time, the theatre retracts from its former image as an essentially terpsichorean theatre: while the show consists of 10 dance tableaux, there are 11 tableaux that present circus performances. By comparison, *The Wyld* presented 11 dances, and only 6 circus acts. While in *The Wyld* the circus acts were either distinguishable as self-contained tableaux or been given their time and focus by the show's directors Manfred Thierry Mugler and Roland Welke to function as an act within a tableau,³¹ *THE ONE Grand Show* uses circus performers as characters conveying the show's narrative, as well as human décor.

CONCLUSION

Revue practice beyond the GDR's confined time and space

The continuity of revue practice continues to trouble prevailing conceptions of time and their manifestations in the history and culture of the Friedrichstadt-Palast in post-reunification Germany. The aim of this dissertation has been to make visible these relations between present and past. I started the introduction with the paradox that although the Palast suppressed its history by aligning its rhetoric and operations with the official line of early post-reunification discourses of reappraising the GDR, it still exploits paradigms of revue making that are anything but contemporary. Although the discourse of reappraising East German culture has moved on elsewhere, the unfinished reappraisal of revue culture at the Palast is also the aspect that currently constitutes the Friedrichstadt-Palast revue and, I argue, is also what it makes it unique. Although people I talked to even described it as 'quirky' and 'something, I've never seen and never expected', they also described it as 'peculiar' and 'somehow not quite satisfying' at the same time. I have argued in the fourth chapter that this is due to the theatre not having sufficiently worked with the effects that syncopated time has on performance. Throughout this thesis, I have made the reader aware how these relations between past and present are shaped nowadays and how the past has constituted the present, although it is hardly admitted. Following from my assessments, I am convinced that the Palast's future will be shaped by the role that is granted to its performance history. As long as that history remains subject to political readings only, the creative continuity to reconsider its revue behaviour as paradigm or as principle remain suppressed, effective, and unchallenged.

These convictions resulted from addressing the main purpose of this dissertation, which was to broaden the view on East German revue history to start describing Friedrichstadt-Palast revue practices, that is, the institution's ways of doing and their development, in order to sharpen an understanding of what exactly fuels the contemporary Palast revue's aesthetics. In chapter 1, I argued that revue ideas have been recycled and reconstructed notions of how 'Berlin' and 'revue history' were perceived at the time of creating the revue. This resulted in the emergence of specific trajectories of telling a revue's idea from tableau to tableau. In chapter 2, the moving socialist body of the revue extravaganza was used as a narrative to tell the history of the Palast as an East German institution of dance and circus performance. Although no one

believed that a socialist handstand ever existed, the discourses that emerged from a specifically 1950s thinking about bodies and aestheticised movement shaped both a memorable metaphor and the Palast's revue practice for the remainder of the GDR's existence. Embedded in this embodied thinking about the revue, the practitioners at the Palast imagined a new stage that would resemble the latest developments of Marxist cultural practice in the East German revue extravaganza. Chapter 3 described how the new theatre space engendered new revue practices and reflected a specifically East German configuration of technophilia. Versions of the strategies of the dialectical staging of space and special effects still structure directorial choices in the Palast's contemporary productions, as I have shown in chapter 4. What used to be 'principles' rooted in ideological considerations of culture have turned into paradigms, that is, foundational designs that express the ways in which the Palast revue is made. Apart from the institution's presentness and its ever-increasing capability to produce spectacular images and great revue tableaux, the contemporary Palast is still heavily fuelled by the past that this dissertation has started to make visible.

At the end of chapter 4, I outlined how this knowledge might be productively employed by revue makers in order to drive the re-invention of a kind of revue practice that remains characteristic of the Friedrichstadt-Palast, but also allows the theatre to develop further. According to the theatre's funding body, that is, the City of Berlin, the institution's purpose is the nourishment of the genre (Friedrichstadt-Palast, 2017:[online]). An active approach towards its practices and their histories is thus already the institution's *raison d'être*. Imagining a futurity for the genre 'Palast-Revue' encompasses more than its preservation: its idea of progress actually links the contemporary revue awkwardly closely to its Marxist variants, though only on paper. The deliberations in this dissertation could therefore undergird the Palast's purpose to not simply aspire towards Las Vegas as a surface-level development towards an increased excellence in production values and reproduce notions of the global show, but to create a genre that is vernacular and a continuous development of the post-socialist revue in reunified Germany.

The dominant memory discourse that is employed by the Palast to construct its identity regard the GDR as a period that is over. Beyond the scope of this dissertation is then the question, why a cultural coming to terms was not facilitated as broadly as it had been in other cultural sectors. The speculation that come out of this project are three-fold: first, because the reunification was organized under Western narration, the West's ignorance of a distinct East German culture may have led to the superimposition of

Western culture, especially when West Germans took over leadership of East German cultural institutions, without accounting for local cultures. As a result, the West Germans encountered East German cultures on the basis of prejudices that formed during the Cold War, but which had low currency in actually accounting for these cultures. Second, considering that the initial protests of 1989 were about a reformed, not an abolished, GDR (Cooke, 2005:7), the preservation of some cultural elements might also be construed as select moments of individual resistances against the incoming Western cultures by small groups of people who still work at the Palast and shape its cultural products, such as choreographers, stage designers, or dramaturgs. Third, as I have explained in chapter 4, socialist and capitalist time are hardly compatible but can still co-exist in varying degrees of legibility and impact. A mix, rather than an active coming-to-terms, is what followed. This dissertation has addressed these points and contradictions, but further scrutiny would be necessary in future research projects.

As a case study representing the repercussions of East German culture in post-reunification Germany, the Friedrichstadt-Palast has shown how reflecting on the GDR is not necessarily synonymous with its preservation, such as discourses of *Ostalgie*¹ have tried to allege. The approach of the thesis has been to see and understand the relations between pre-reunification past and post-reunification present as the latest version of that past. The interdisciplinary contributions of this study built on this understanding of continuity, rather than return. In performance studies, it contributes to understanding newly developed theatrical work in terms of reconstruction, thus the provisions of newness as reconfigurations of existing behaviours. In the studies of revue performance, this dissertation adds considerations on the non-capitalistic version of the extravaganza and the theatrical spectacle and how it is produced across ideologies. In Cold War studies, the continuity approach contributes to rendering the East European cultures not in terms of the failures of their political systems, but considers them in the light of the ideological pursuit of cultural superiority, in which there have been many players. In the introduction to *Theatre, Globalization and the Cold War*, Christopher Balme and Berenika Szymanski-Düll pointed out that there is still a tendency to ‘read’ the

¹ *Ostalgie* is a neologism that conflates the German terms for ‘east’ (*Ost*), and ‘nostalgia’ (*Nostalgie*). It aims at providing an antithesis to portraying the GDR as a dictatorship dominated by human rights abuse. Sara Jones argued that *Ostalgie* is ‘communicative memory within families’ (2014:13) and Jonathan Grix elucidated that ‘attitudes and values shaped under state socialism...become far more pronounced once the state is less visible in people’s lives’ (2002:4). This led to positive recollections of intimate encounters that had the generalising effect of seeing ‘the former East German regime through rose-tinted spectacles’ (Cooke, 2005:8).

Cold War into performances that results ‘in allegorizations that may illuminate the scholar more than the performance’ (2017:3). This study diversified what is commonly described as the ‘East bloc’ by considering the cultural diversity amongst and continuity beyond this ‘bloc’. In terms of East German cultural studies, this dissertation also adds one more piece towards understanding cultural production in the GDR and beyond. In memory cultures, it adds many questions as to how valuable a literary approach towards reappraising culture actually is in the light of an analysis that includes ways of doing and performing.

As I have described in chapter 2, the Palast tried to re-theatricalise its revues without having had the luxury of a new revue theatre. The principles that the institution developed during this time and after the building of the new theatre are now the greatest assets of the Palast’s pursuit to become global. Revue makers in Las Vegas, by comparison, are heavily struggling to imagine futures for their revue extravaganzas that reflect the modern and global show. When *Jubilee!*, the last revue extravaganza on the Las Vegas strip, ended its 35-year-run after more than 18,720 performances (Leach, 2015:[online]) on 11 February 2016, the going-dark ‘represented the inevitable severance of a direct line between contemporary Vegas and its golden era’ (Kelemen, 2016:[online]). While this reflects notions of nostalgia, the Las Vegas revue has never managed to modernise itself, as the Palast has done several times. According to Las Vegas show columnist John Katsilometes, shows like *Jubilee!* were ‘trapped in time’ (in Wasser, 2016:[online]). Although I agree, I would add that this trapping is much more a lack of historically grown practices, that is, the ongoing diversification rather than identical reproduction over the course of 35 years. While the Palast looks at Las Vegas for future inspiration, the Las Vegas revue itself struggles to find such inspiration. In the context of the analyses that this thesis produced, this might be because Vegas, consisting of individual rather than institutionalised producers, lacks the ability to modernise its means of production. Its practices are not as established as the Palast’s methods of creative production. The historic plethora of methods that the Palast relies on, unspokenly, is missing for the Vegas revue. Instead, the vestiges of a bygone era obstruct the possibilities for a diversification and modernisation of the Las Vegas show. The strategies of queering or reassessing history outlined in this thesis might thus in the widest sense also apply for Las Vegas’s future revue productions.

Further research emanating from this thesis could involve a closer consideration of the daily exchanges between artists within the Palast and its artistic fields in the soviet states, this includes primarily

the impact of touring and guest performances of the Palast in foreign countries and of other theatre companies on the Palast's stage. In order to further investigate the East German performance paradigms and their efficacy, qualitative research amongst former audience members would be as fascinating as interviewing more former Palast practitioners regarding their practices before and after German reunification. Although channelled in this thesis through aspects of practice, further research would be appropriate to parse out the relation between the GDR revue and the Americanisation of the Weimar revue. The GDR revues expose a conspicuous amount of continued Weimar revue practices when it comes to jazz music and girl culture.² Throughout the GDR and after, the kickline of girls has never vanished, but was incorporated into the tableaux and stories that the revues told. This history is yet to be written and could methodologically be based on Chapter 2, as it, too, is a history that involves examining how the narrative understanding of a specific embodied practice has changed over time.

And the post-socialist paradigms still live on: The Palast's latest show, VIVID (premiered 11 October 2018), is the first collaboration with a former Cirque du Soleil director, Krista Monson. The show exploits narratives of prospectiveness when aliens land again on the theatre's stage, while the show itself is a celebration of life and humanity. In accordance with the ways in which the Friedrichstadt-Palast currently historicises itself, it will celebrate its centenary in 2019. Will the Palast, one hundred years since Max Reinhardt purchased the venue at Am Zirkus 1, continue to forget about the roughly 45 years of the revue extravaganza's retheatricalisation after the Second World War or will it find ways of acknowledging its estranged, alien history?

² Contributors of the *Artistik* magazine extensively discussed the use of jazz in East German entertainment cultures.

Provisional Production Timeline 1945-2017

This production timeline includes the Friedrichstadt-Palast's in-house productions between 1945 and 2017. It is a combined reconstruction fusing the labels of the drop files in the files cabinets in the archive (1945-1980) and the fragmentary production time lines in Carlé, 1978; Carlé and Martens, 1987; Schumann, 1995. For productions between 1984-2009, see Welke, 2009:146-155.

This list must still be considered incomplete. Where possible, revue titles are given in quotation marks. Before Lupo assumed office in 1947, programme bills were named according to the month in which they premiered. Lupo started giving them titles.

This list excludes children and youth revues, seasonal revues (such as winter revues, like 'Jingle Bells', which returned annually between 1996 and 2007), guest appearances of the Palast elsewhere, guest appearances of stars, theatre, and performance groups on the Palast's stage. It also includes key dates relating to the institution.

1945

March Destruction of the stage house through the bombing of Berlin
Direktor Marion Spadoni assumed office (in office until 1947)

17 Aug Theatre resumed operations under the name 'Palast-Variété'
August
October
November
December

1946

April
May
June
December

1947

* Director Nicola Lupo assumed office (in office until 1954).

February 'Kubanisches Fest'

June 'Tanz der Puppen'

September

October

November

1 Nov The municipal government of Berlin acquired the 'Palast-Variété'
and renamed it 'Friedrichstadt-Palast'

December

1948

January 'Schönheits-Cocktail'

February 'Fasching der Wiener Wäscherinnen'

March 'Hochzeit an der Spree'

April 'Ein fideler Harem'

May 'Wir drehen durch'

June 'Unter den Brücken von Paris'

July	‘Ein schöner Traum’
August	‘Berlin am Wannsee’
September	
October	
November	
December	

1949

* Reconstruction of the stage house completed.

January	‘Fahrendes Volk’
February	‘Faschingsspuk’
March	‘Zum blauen Enzian’
April	‘Zigeunerliebe’
May	‘Blütenfest’
June	‘Die gläserne Kugel’
Sep-Oct	‘Stralauer Fischzug’
December	‘Hafenmelodie’

1950

January	
February	‘Münchhausens Brautwerbung’
Mar-Apr	‘Das Abenteuer von Venedig’
May-Jun	‘Rummel-Rummel’
Aug-Sep	‘Aus der Luft gegriffen’
October	‘Heinrich III.’
November	‘Feierabend in der Vorstadt’
December	‘Orientalische Nacht’

1951

* Establishment of in-house workshops.

February	‘Karnevalstraum’
March	‘Frühlingszauber im Bienenreiche’
April	‘Polowetzer Tänze’
May	‘Kaleidoskop’
June	‘Grenzen der Macht’
September	‘Weißt du noch?’
October	‘Die Komödianten kommen’
Nov-Dec	‘Von der Isar bis zur Spree’

1952

January	‘Tanz der Puppen’
February	‘Liebe, List und Karneval’
March	‘Frühlingsstimmenwalzer’ / ‘Mazurka’
April	‘Barcarole’
May	‘Unter dem Maibaum’
June	‘Ferienglück am Ostseestrand’
August	‘Hand in Hand’
Sept-Oct	‘Hochzeit im Walde’
Nov-Dec	‘Lotterie, Lotterie’

1953

January	‘Coppelia’
Feb-Mar	‘3x Liebe’
Apr-May	‘Frühling in Werder’
Jun & Aug	‘Orientalische Legenden’

September	‘Capriccio Italien’
October	‘Heiteres Wien’
November	‘Aufforderung zum Tanz’ / ‘Kaukasische Suite’
December	‘Weihnachtsmarkt in Alt-Berlin’

1954

* Director Gottfried Herrmann assumed office (in office until 1961).

January	‘Der Zauberlehrling’
February	‘Fantasie’
March	‘Csárdásfürstin’
April	
May	‘Musik, Musik’
August	‘Solang’ noch unter Linden’
September	
October	‘Einmal am Rhein’
November	‘Trembita’
December	‘Eine schöne Bescherung’

1955

January	‘verrückt und toll und wunderbar’
February	‘Artistik und Musik im Scheinwerfer’
April	‘Rendezvous in Paris’
May	‘Frauen im Palast’
Aug-Sep	‘Sommer, See und Sonnenschein’
October	‘Einmal am Rhein’
November	
December	

1956

January	‘Glück muss man haben’
March	‘Palast-Parade’
May	‘Treffpunkt Palast’
June	
Aug-Sep	‘Kinder, wie die Zeit vergeht’
October	‘Einmal am Rhein’
December	‘Fröhliche Weihnachten’

1957

January	‘Das Jahr fängt gut an’
Feb-Mar	‘Palast-Revue’
April	‘Bunte Palastpalette’
June	‘Spanischer Pfeffer’
August	‘Kinder, wie die Zeit vergeht’
Sep-Oct	‘Lüge auf den ersten Blick’
December	‘Skin und Rodel gut’

1958

January	‘Mit Schwung und Laune ins neue Jahr’
Feb-Mar	‘Triumph einer Melodie’
April	‘vorwiegend warm’
May	‘Die Bäume schlagen aus’
June	‘Bitte recht freundlich’
Aug-Sep	‘Das goldene Prag’
Oct-Nov	‘Bon soir Paris’
December	‘Erfüllte Weihnachtswünsche’

1959

* Establishment of the dramaturg's office.

January	'50 Frauen um Casanova'
Feb-Mar	'Zwischenfall am Varieté'
April	'Alles für Sie'
May	'Zauber der Jugend'
June	'Hinter den Kulissen'
August	'Kinder, wie die Zeit vergeht'
September	'Noten, Nuk und noch viel Nettes'
October	'Sterne am Varieté'
November	'Mit Herz und Humor'
December	'Ein Ball rollt um die Welt'

1960

January	'Ein Ball rollt um die Welt'
February	'Komiker lassen bitten'
March	'Heute nacht oder nie'
Apr-May	'Budapester Melodie'
June	'Sommerliches Intermezzo'
October	'Sterne am Varieté'

* Herrmann passed away. Acting director Karl Stäcker assumed office.

November	'Warenhaus der Guten Laune'
December	'Wie wär's mit einem Schwedenpunsch?'

1961

* Director Wolfgang E. Struck assumed office (in office until 1988).

February	'Faschingsgalopp'
April	'Artistische Sondermarken'
May	
June	'Berlin bleibt doch Berlin!'
Aug-Sep	'Strandkorb Nummer 13'
November	'Mit Volldampf voraus'
December	'Das hat Berlin schon mal geseh'n'

1962

January	'Das hat Berlin schon mal geseh'n'
February	'Treffpunkt Berlin'
March	'Hallo Mama'
April	'Schirm, Charme und nasse Füße'
June	'Vanna Olivieri'
Aug-Sep	'Fantasie in Schwarz-weiß'
October	'Berlin grüßt Bukarest'
December	'Eine kleine Nachtmusike'

1963

January	'Eine kleine Nachtmusike'
Mar-Apr	'Die große Schau'
May	'Duft Blumen'
June	'Revue ohne Titel' / 'Der Palast geht baden'
August	'hitzig, witzig, spritzig'
October	'Sterne am Varieté'
Nov-Dec	'Die Frau des Jahres' (Palastical)

1964

January	‘Prager Eisrevue’
February	‘Hinein’
March	‘Budapester Nächte’
Apr-May	‘Fantasie in schwarz-weiß’
June	‘Er und Sie’
July	‘Schlagerparade’
September	‘Artistik, Tanz und gute Laune’
Oct-Nov	‘Der Mann, der Dr. Watson war’ (Palastical)

1965

January	‘Ungarische Eisrevue’
February	‘Treffpunkt Berlin’
Mar-Apr	‘Wenn es Nacht wird in Paris’
May	‘Zu Gast bei Willi Hagara’
June	‘Schlagerparade’
August	‘Heiß und verrückt’
September	‘Für Auge und Ohr’
October	‘Revue der Liebe’
Nov-Dec	‘Hokus Pokus’

1966

February	‘So ein Malheur’
Mar-Apr	‘Berliner Luft’
May	‘Der Mai ist gekommen’
June	‘Schlagerparade ‘66’
Oct-Nov	‘Kleiner Mann auf großer Fahrt’ (Palastical)

1967

January	‘Auftakt 1967’
February	‘Palast-Mosaik’
Mar-Apr	‘Ich lade mir heut’ Gäste ein’
May	‘Alles Illusion’
June	‘Schlagerrevue ‘67’
Aug-Sep	‘Wiedersehen ist wunderschön’
29 Sep	‘Gala-Abend: 100 Jahre Am Zirkus 1’ (Gala programme)
Oct-Nov	‘Ein Engel tritt ins Rampenlicht’
December	‘Wochenende auf Wolke 7’

1968

February	‘Minirock und Riesenwelle’
February	‘Vom Besten das Beste’
Mar-Apr	‘Er macht det schon’ (Palastical)
May	‘Fantasie in Revue’
June	‘Schlagerrevue 1968’
Sep	‘Kleider Machen Leute’
Oct-Nov	‘Revue-Akademie, 1. Lektion’
December	‘Eine schöne Bescherung’

1969

February	‘Das Haus an der Spree’
Mar-Apr	‘Kintopp, Knüller und Kaskaden’
Apr-May	‘Warenhaus der guten Laune’ (Palastical)
Jun-Jul	‘Schlagerrevue 1969’
December	‘Morgen kommt der Weihnachtsmann’

1970

January	‘Zirkus ohne Sägespäne’
March	‘Mini Midi Maxi’
April	‘Auf Wiedersehen, Katja’
May-June	‘Die Reise um die Welt in 40 Stunden’ (Palastical)
Aug-Sep	‘Zur Feier des Tages’

1971

February	‘Hepp’
Mar-Apr	‘kess und verliebt’
May	‘Freu dich auf heute’
Aug-Sep	‘He, Leute, Musik’
Oct-Nov	‘Achtung Kurven’
Nov-Dec	‘Simsalabim’

1972

January	‘Vom Besten das Beste’
February	‘Mieter, Mimen und Musik’
April	‘Wir tanzen in die Welt’
Apr-May	‘Die Hesse Revue’
May-Jun	‘So ein Theater’
August	‘Wir tanzen in die Welt’
September	‘Was ihr wollt’
October	‘R wie Revue’
December	‘Der Weihnachtsmann macht Pause’

1973

Feb-Mar	‘Durch die Blume gesagt’
April	‘Klock 7, achten Strom’
May	‘Expo ‘73’
July	‘Sommer, Sonne und Revue’
Oct-Dec	‘Hallo Eberhardt’
Dec	‘Kollege W’

1974

February	‘Melodien der Welt’
Apr-Jun	‘Eva & Co.’
June	‘Expo ‘74’
October	‘Gib dem Glück eine Chance’
Oct-Nov	‘Klock 7, achten Strom’
Dec	‘Heiß und kalt’

1975

* Increasing number of guest appearances by stars, performance groups, theatres.

Feb-May	‘Hallo Eberhardt’
May-Jun	‘Ouvertüre mit 6’
Oct-Nov	‘flic-flac’
Nov-Dec	‘Ein Jahr in Musik’

1976

January	‘Gäste lassen bitten’
Feb-Mar	‘Das war’s’
Apr-May	‘Guten Abend’

Nov-Dec 'Ahoi Silvester'

1977

* Partial reconstruction (new seating and heating)

Jan 'Musik liegt in der Luft'

Feb-Mar 'Wir 2'

Apr-May 'Berlin Live'

Nov-Dec 'Fantasie in Farbe'

1978

Feb-Apr 'Ein bisschen Spaß muss sein'

Apr-Jun 'Berlin 78 – Rund um die Spree'

Aug-Oct 'Ohne Netz und doppelten Boden'

Oct-Dec 'Bunt und heiter usw.'

1979

Feb-Mar 'Tour de Music'

Apr-Jun 'Phantastische Geschichten'

Oct-Dec 'So sind wir – Revue 79'

1980

Jan 'Musik liegt in der Luft'

Feb 'Seekiste' (Last performance on 29 Feb 1980)

*closure of the old Friedrichstadt-Palast for the public. The theatre remained rehearsal space until the new theatre opened in April 1984.

1981

26 June Groundbreaking ceremony

1982

-

1983

3 June Topping out ceremony

1984

27 April 'Premiere: Friedrichstraße 107' (Inauguration of the new Palast)

13 Nov 'Variété Variété'

1985

12 Sep 'Hereinspaziert'

1986

18 Mar 'Revuezirkus'

1987

23 May 'Hallo, Berlin, 7-5-0'

7 Nov 'Zu zweit' (Cooperation with Leningrad Music Hall)

1988

23 April 'FP spezial'

* Director Reinhold Stoevesand assumed office.

7 Oct 'Traumvisionen'

1989

30 Sep 'Einfach zauberhaft'

1990

* Director Hans-Gerald Otto assumed office.

26 Sep 'Kiek ma an'

1991

28 Mar 'Wie ein Vogel schwerelos'

1992

* Director Julian Herrey assumed office.

10 Apr 'City Lights'

1993

10 Apr 'Jazzleggs'

* Director Alexander Iljinskij assumed office.

1994

26 Mar 'Classics'

1995

24 Mar 'Sterne'

1996

1 Mar 'Cinema'

1997

5 Sep 'Joker—Revue mystique'

1998

cont. 'Joker—Revue mystique'

1999

27 Feb 'Elements'

2000

9 Sep 'Revue Berlin'

2001

cont. 'Revue Berlin'

2002

1 Mar 'Wunderbar—Die 2002. Nacht'

2003

5 Sep 'Revuepalast—die Palastrevue zum Zwanzigsten'

2004

4 Sept 'Hexen'

2005

3 Sep 'Casanova'

2006

13 May 'Glanzlichter'

2007

2 Mar 'Rhythmus Berlin'
*1 Nov Director Bernd Schmidt assumed office.

2008

25 Jan 'Glanzlichter der Revue'
9 Oct 'Qi—Eine Palast-Phantasie'

2009

cont. 'Qi—Eine Palast-Phantasie'

2010

cont. 'Qi—Eine Palast-Phantasie'
2 Sep 'Yma—Zu schön, um wahr zu sein'

2011

cont. 'Yma—Zu schön, um wahr zu sein'

2012

cont. 'Yma—Zu schön, um wahr zu sein'
1 Oct 'ShowMe: Glamour is back'

2013

cont. 'ShowMe: Glamour is back'

2014

cont. 'ShowMe: Glamour is back'
27 Oct 'The Wyld—Nicht von dieser Welt'

2015

cont. 'The Wyld—Nicht von dieser Welt'

2016

cont. 'The Wyld—Nicht von dieser Welt'
6 Oct 'THE ONE Grand Show'

Touring productions

1954 Moscow, Leningrad
1955 Düsseldorf, Wuppertal-Elberfeld
Moscow, Leningrad, Stalingrad
1961 Leipzig
1962 Bucharest, Leipzig
1964 Warsaw, Sopot
1965 Warsaw, Wrocław
1966 Budapest, Moscow, Leningrad

1969	Budapest, Moscow, Leningrad
1971	Dresden
1972	Warsaw, Katowice, Magdeburg
1973	Moscow
1974	'Revue '74' in Prague
1975	Karl-Marx-Stadt, Sopot, Magdeburg
1976	Karl-Marx Stadt
1977	Magdeburg, Karl-Marx Stadt, Dresden, Moscow
1980	'Seekiste' at Palast der Republik, Berlin, after the closing of the Palast
1980	Sopot, Warsaw, Madgeburg
	'Himmels Macht Liebe' at Metropol-Theater
	'Wie hätten Sie's den gern' at Metropol-Theater
1981	'Revue '81' in Schwedt, Leningrad, Karl-Marx Stadt, Gera
	'Abends im Rampenlicht' at Metropol-Theater, Berlin
	'Berlin-täglich neu' at Palast der Republik, Berlin
1982	Schwedt
	'Im weißen Rößl' at Metropol-Theater,
	'Untern Linden, Untern Linden' at Deutsche Staatsoper Berlin
1983	Karl-Marx-Stadt, Budapest, Magdeburg, Katowice
	'Beswingt und heiter' at Palast der Republik, Berlin
	'Im weißen Rößl' at Metropol-Theater
8 Jun 1991	'City Lights' at Alte Oper in Frankfurt am Main

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